



BEER CHEER

Popular pub unveiling its new look



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TRUE GRIT

Council hits streets to tackle big freeze



PAGE 5

Shops to get boost from road re-opening

A MAIN route through Dudley town centre will open to two-way traffic next week for the first time in 15 years.

A £650,000 project in King Street aimed at boosting visitor numbers and trade is nearing an end.

Only buses and taxis had been able to use the route and motorists wishing to drive from one side of King Street to the other were diverted in a loop around Flood Street car parks to the rear of King Street.

Precinct

But the road is re-opening to all traffic, which the council says will have improve access to the town centre including the Churchill shopping precinct.

It will also allow businesses to make the most of passing trade after eight new parking spaces have been created.

Businesses in King Street, Roy Jevons, who has run a music store there for 33 years, said shops had lost 'the impulsive buyer' since cars had been stopped from using the road. He hopes the new layout will encourage passers-by to visit the stores.

"Hopefully in the New Year we will be seeing the benefits of the road re-opening," Mr Jevons added.

New venue for concert

DUDLEY Town Hall has been closed for health and safety reasons due to an internal structural problem — meaning a major Christmas concert has had to be moved at the last minute.

The Gentlemen Songsters' Christmas concert on Saturday is being relocated at Brierley Hill Civic Hall. Tickets already bought for the 7.30pm concert will be valid at the new venue but seating will be unreserved.

The concert, for the Mayor's Charities, features a Wall Heath children's choir.

HOSPITAL NEEDS HELP, SAYS MP

DUDLEY North MP Ian Austin has called on the Government for extra funding to help Russells Hall Hospital in the wake of an inspection demanding improvements.

The Care Quality Commission rated the majority of areas 'good' at Russells Hall.

But the watchdog also said that other areas had to improve. These included safety and responsiveness. The commission also raised concerns about staffing levels.

The body said it was confident the hospital will meet the demands but will carry out further inspections to check progress.

The MP has written to the Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt urging him to give Dudley hospitals more cash to help them tackle the crisis.

Concerned

He said: "I'm really concerned that this report says improvements are still needed. Doctors, nurses and other staff are working flat out at Russells Hall but the Government have squandered £3 billion on reorganising the NHS instead of supporting front-line staff."

"David Cameron promised the NHS would be safe in his hands, but our local hospital is facing a crisis because of his cutbacks."

"Local people are facing longer waits at A&E, cancelled operations for a decade and waits for vital cancer tests and treatments increasing too."

Despite a planned cut in 400 jobs, the hospital is hoping to continue to employ nurses to meet demand.

There are currently about 20 nurse vacancies. The managing trust is under fi-

By Alex Ross

nancial pressure to meet a £12 million deficit.

Chief inspector of hospitals Professor Sir Mike Richards said: "We know that The Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust has been facing significant challenges with the increasing numbers of patients coming to hospital in emergency. My view is that the trust is not far off achieving a rating of good and I have confidence that the leadership of the trust is addressing the issues we have highlighted."

The commission's report followed two announced inspections in March. Public meetings were held in Stourbridge and Dudley. Interviews were carried out with staff and a questionnaire was filled by patients.

Mr Richards said: "Overall, this trust was found to require improvement, although we rated it good in terms of having caring staff and effective services."

"The improvements required by the trust were within the grasp of the trust and its leaders. We were confident that these could be achieved quickly."

The hospital serves around 450,000 people in Dudley and Stourbridge.

■ Chief remains 'positive' — see page 3

Even Santa can't have a sneak preview



No peeking — Even Santa will have to wait until Easter to see Dudley Zoo's upcoming Castle Creatures exhibition

THE new £250,000 Castle Creatures attraction at Dudley Zoo is being kept under wraps this Christmas — even with Santa Claus as a neighbour.

Work is well under way on the new interactive medieval experience within Dudley Castle, which will explain its history and house animal exhibits to show how people lived in close proximity to rats and bats in everyday life.

But when Santa moved in to his Winter Wonderland Castle Grotto, where he will be greeting children until Christmas Eve, the new features were covered up so as not to spoil the surprise.

Dudley Zoo media and communications officer Rachel Hickman said: "We're all excited about the new experience, which is taking shape and looking fantastic within the castle."

"Because we don't want to spoil the surprise for anybody until the big reveal at Easter next year, we've temporarily wrapped up the huge board game flooring and all the interactive interior displays — and not even Santa was allowed to have a peek when he arrived to oversee final preparations to his grotto."

Work on the six-month construction project, supported by cash from

the European Regional Development Fund, started in September.

The new attraction will set the zoo in its historic location, telling the story from the castle's origins in 1070 through to the present day, focusing on how people in medieval times lived.

Features will include a grill where visitors can inhale authentic smells of the old days.

The lay-out includes a unique interactive screen whereby visitors can create their own animals from a gene pool, plus a huge board game telling the story of thriving animals and those facing extinction in the modern world.

Business rates cut for traders in town

MORE than 100 businesses will receive a 10 per cent reduction in their rates due to the disruption caused during the £6.7 million regeneration of Dudley town centre.

Work began in January on the overhaul of Dudley Market. Roads were closed and traders moved to temporary stalls as a result of the work, leading to a loss in takings.

Now Dudley Council has announced plans to boost businesses. It has negotiated a rents discount with the Government's Valuation Office Agency for those that suffered the most during the upheaval.

Businesses in parts of High Street, Market Place, Castle Street, New Street, the Churchill centre and Trident shopping centre will receive the cut. It will run from next month until the revamp is completed, expected to be in summer 2015. Letters will sent to businesses informing them of the discount.

Regeneration boss Councillor Judy Foster, said: "We are ploughing investment into improving Dudley town centre but we recognise that this has impacted some businesses. It is not us but central Government that sets our business rates."

"I am pleased that they will receive some assistance during what, for some, has been a difficult year."

Homes sites work starting

TWO multi-million pound housing projects that will regenerate pockets of land in Dudley will get under way this month.

New homes will be built on the site of a former council depot on The Walk in Sedgley and on disused land in Norfolk Road, Wollaston.

Dudley Council is investing £2 million to develop both schemes and £385,000 has come from the Homes and Communities Agency. Both are expected to be completed next summer.



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Parking fines have 'desired effect'

HUNDREDS of fines have been handed out to drivers who parked badly at railway stations in Sandwell and Dudley.

During eight weeks, 205 fines of £100 were dished out at Sandwell and Dudley, 199 at Rowley Regis and 135 at Stourbridge Junction. The fines are reduced to £60 if paid within 14 days.

Centro decided to take action

after complaints about cars obstructing other motorists and forcing pedestrians to walk in the road at stations. Bosses say the scheme is proving successful as the number of fines given out is falling each week.

Councillor Roger Horton, lead member for rail and Midland Metro for Centro, said: "Although tickets are still being issued, and despite a small rise in weeks six and seven of

the scheme, the overall steady reduction in numbers shows the message is getting through.

"We are glad the campaign is having the desired effect and making people think about parking more considerably."

Stephen Rhodes, Centro director of operations, said Stourbridge, Rowley Regis and Sandwell and Dudley have the highest numbers

because they are some of the busiest stations on the network.

He said demand for parking was being addressed by car park expansion work. Work is underway to add 360 spaces to the existing 382 at Rowley Regis, while 223 were being added to the 739 at Stourbridge Junction. A re-design is also due at Sandwell and Dudley station next year to add to the 374 spaces.

Taxpayers face bill for fly-tip rubbish

TENS of thousands of pounds has been spent clearing up after fly-tippers in Dudley borough during the past two years.

Sites in Quarry Bank, Kingswinford, Cradley and Halesowen were among those most targeted by people dumping waste.

Figures released under the Freedom of Information Act show Dudley Council was forced to pay out £49,395 in 2013/14 to clear up rubbish and £35,255 in 2012/13.

NHS patients give Trust good report

A HEALTH trust which cares for patients with a mental health condition has been ranked highly.

Dudley and Walsall Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust scored among the top 20 per cent trusts in the country for patients experience.

Patients rating their experience as 'good or very good' in the Care Quality Commission Community Mental Health Survey. In the same survey, 75 per cent of those who responded reported that they felt that they were treated with dignity and respect.

Nine out of ten reported that they felt their health or social care worker listened to them carefully.

Results from the National Mental Health Inpatient Survey were also positive, according to trust bosses.

The trust scored significantly higher than the national average for patients feeling welcome on the ward, hospital cleanliness and being listened to by psychiatrists and nurses.

Significant improvements from last year's survey were made in access to out-of-hours phone contact, availability of activities and quality of hospital food.

Councillor Khurshid Ahmed said the council worked hard to track down and prosecute fly-tippers.

The council said the top five hot-spots where the most money was spent were: Mears Coppice, Quarry Bank; Lapal Lane South, Halesowen; Holbeache Lane, Kingswinford; Hellier Street, Dudley; and Foxcote Lane in Cradley.

Cost

Councillor Ahmed said: "The cost of staff time clearing up fly-tipping and then disposing of the waste over the last two years was just over £80,000, which we hope illustrates to people what a serious offence this is.

"With the help of the community, we have carried out prosecutions where we are able to identify the offenders so we would urge people who witness fly-tipping, or have any information about incidents in the borough, to contact Dudley Council Plus on 0300 555 2345.

"We will not hesitate to prosecute people through the courts for this kind of anti-social behaviour."

In September, the council took action after rubbish was left strewn across land off Clinic Drive in Lye after residents and Abdul Qadus, chairman of Lye Community Centre, called for the site to be cleared up. But Mr Qadus said more rubbish had since been dumped, including car seats and a mattress.

New Old Bull is shrine to ale



Landlady Lyndsey Morris celebrating the refit at the Old Bull's Head in Lower Gornal

A TRADITIONAL pub in Lower Gornal has re-opened its doors to become a 'shrine to real ale'. The Old Bull's Head, in Redhall Road, has been closed for six weeks during which a six-figure transformation has taken place.

It is owned by Black Country Inns, which runs 23 pubs across the Black Country and Birmingham, and runs the neighbouring brewery. Company director Angus McMeeking said they have refurbished the pub but were keeping its traditions alive.

"We did the refurbishment so that we

could get the pub back into shape," he said. "Everything that is now in the pub is completely brand new but we have kept it as traditional looking as possible.

"We hope that customers will be pleasantly surprised with the pub's new look."

Black Country Inns took over the pub in 2004 from Enterprise Inns. A brewery has been on the site since 1834.

Landlady Lyndsey Morris said: "We will be running tours to show off the brew-house. The pub will be a shrine to real ale from the Black Country."

Beacon is to unveil its tree of memory

A CHARITY has invited people to take part in its annual memorial tree ceremony.

The Beacon Forget Me Not Tree will be lit on today (Thursday) at 6.30pm as part of a dedication ceremony and carol service at the sight loss charity's Sedgley centre on the Wolverhampton Road.

Each light on the tree, which will remain lit throughout the festive season, will represent the memory of a loved one.

Jenni Fryer, Beacon fundraising manager, said: "Every year at Christmas time we give people the opportunity to remember their loved ones by sponsoring a light on our Christmas tree.

"A sensitive service is held at the foot of the tree to help us to remember and to pray for the loved ones we have lost, which gives tremendous comfort to the people taking part as well as creating a lovely and meaningful focal point.

"The event is open to all and we look forward to welcoming friends and neighbours, local traders and Beacon service users."

To sponsor a light call Kelly Vickers on 01902 880111 or visit one of the charity's shops, or the centre itself in Sedgley.

218 homes for haulage site

MORE than 200 homes will be built on the site of a haulage firm's former base in Rowley Regis after planning permission was granted.

Sandwell Council has approved the scheme for the Doulton Road site which had been a location for French logistics firm Norbert Dentressangle. A total of 218 homes — houses and apartments — and a retail development will be built.

It comes after bosses announced last year that they would be relocating the business to the East Midlands with the loss of 140 jobs.

Helix demolition

A DISUSED stationary factory will be demolished as its owners search for a buyer for the site. More than 700 were employed at the Helix plant in Engine Lane at its height. The factory closed down eight years ago. Dudley Council have given approval for demolition.

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Hospital boss still 'positive' on review

THE chief executive at Russells Hall Hospital say she remains positive despite a review by a health watchdog demanding improvements.

The Care Quality Commission looked at the hospital and met patient, carers and workers as part of its inspection carried out in March this year.

While it rated three categories of the hospital to be 'good', inspectors said two areas — safety and responsiveness — required improvement. The hospital trust was told to improve and was given a list of demands including reviewing patient flow and ensuring satisfactory staffing levels.

Chief executive Paula Clark said she was pleased with the inspectors' confidence that improvements were 'within the grasp' of the trust. She also praised the hard work of staff, who were endorsed by patients for 'going the extra mile'.

She said: "It is disappointing we haven't quite tipped over the line into good. I think we were on the cusp of being rated as good and if we had tipped over it would have been fantastic for the staff and a real boost for them. But we haven't quite made it this time. We recognise we can always do better."

Conversion on cue at church

PLANS to turn a former snooker hall into a church have been given the go-ahead.

The Birmingham Pentecostal Fellowship will move in to The Golden Cue, in Station Road, Rowley Regis, sometime over the next six months.

The organisation, which has almost 100 members, currently hires a church hall in Solihull.

The fellowship affiliated to Assemblies of God plans to hold services on Saturdays and Sundays. The church group will plan now to buy the site for £230,000.

New gym to open

A NEW gym will open in High Street, Brierley Hill, at the end of the month as people start considering getting rid of the Christmas pounds.

Xercise4Less will open on December 31, boasting more than 400 pieces of equipment and creating 40 jobs.

Birthday celebrations for little Daisy-Mae



Daisy-Mae Little celebrates her first birthday

SHE was the 'girl who couldn't wait'. Daisy-Mae Little came into the world three-and-a-half months early.

Weighing just 11b and 13 oz, the tiny youngster spent 13 weeks in hospital with her proud parents Wayne and Jennifer, from Dudley, at her side.

Now their brave daughter, who captured the hearts of thousands of people across the globe, has celebrated her first birthday.

And on Saturday night fundraising event was held in her honour to raise money for the hospital where she received specialist neo-natal care.

Since leaving New Cross Hospital in Wolverhampton and going home with her family to Pensnett, she has 'come on leaps and bounds', her parents say.

To celebrate her birthday, the family went to the Sealife Centre in Birmingham for the day.

Mr Little said: "I wasn't sure what it was going to be like as a day out because it development terms although it's first birthday she really is only like an eight-and-a-half month baby. But she absolutely loved it because it was so visual."

"She really liked the jelly fish because

they were in bright colourful tubes in the display."

"The day was such a contrast to where we were 12 months ago when we were in the hospital and not thinking about the next day. We were just living minute by minute, hour by hour because we didn't know what was going to happen. She's doing really well now and coming on leaps and bounds everyday."

Mr Little, a firefighter for West Midlands Fire Service, has been chronicling his daughter's story on Facebook. Daisy-Mae's page has more than 23,000 followers.

Plea to EDL not to hold mosque protest in town

THE English Defence League is planning to return to Dudley in protest at the decision to grant planning permission for a new mosque.

The far-right protest group intends to hold a demonstration in the town on February 7, according to one of its Facebook pages.

West Midlands MEP and Dudley councillor Bill Etheridge has asked the group to cancel its plans and leave the mosque issue to be settled democratically.

Queues as new Lidl store opens

LIDL Supermarkets opened their brand new store on Stallings Lane, Kingswinford, last week.

Shoppers were waiting outside before it was officially opened by Deputy Mayor of Dudley, Steve Waltho.

Other councillors including Councillor Patrick Harley, leader of the Conservative Group and the Conservative Spokesperson for Policy were also in attendance.

Curious

Mr Harley said: "People were queuing before the store even opened so they were obviously curious to see what's inside."

"It is a great sign of the growing confidence of the economy in Dudley."

The supermarket, which replaced a furniture warehouse, has created 35 new full and part-time jobs.

Lidl currently have 600 stores across the UK and have 13,000 employees.

It has an in-house bakery selling freshly baked bread, rolls and pastries throughout the day.

mosque issue to be settled democratically. The UKIP MEP said: "The mosque is a controversial matter and a lot of people have their opinions on it. It is being opposed on planning grounds. "Groups like the EDL have nothing constructive to add with the way they behave. I ask them to stay away from Dudley. This is a sensitive issue and it does not need people causing trouble."

Dudley Muslim Association is locked in a long planning battle with Dudley Council over a proposal for a mosque on land off Hall Street.

Earlier this month, the association won planning permission for the mosque. But it faces at least two court hearings and legal wrangles before it can be built. In an attempt to avoid the escalating court costs and resolve community disharmony, Muslim leaders say they will consider alternative sites.

On a Facebook page purporting to belong to the EDL's Dudley branch two pictures were added, one giving the date of a 'Dudley Demo' and another picture has 'Dudley we are coming' written on it. Some 600 EDL supporters came to Dudley to demonstrate against the planned mosque in 2010. Violence broke out and parts of the town were brought to a standstill.

'Old Teddy' rescued from the motorway



Best birthday present — Carillion's Paul Rowton returns 'Old Teddy' to four-year-old Daisy Jewkes and her mum Nicola

DAISY Jewkes was left devastated when her teddy bear flew out of the car window as her family travelled along the M6.

Little Daisy thought the little brown bear was gone forever after dropping it from the back seat window of her parents' car while travelling through road works on the M6 near Cannock. But workmen retrieved the treasured toy from the central reservation and reunited the delighted four-year-old with her precious 'old teddy'.

She cried out as she lost her grip of the bear before her mother Nicola agonisingly watched it fall onto the central reservation of the highway, as the family drove back home to Brierley Hill after a family visit to Scotland.

Mrs Jewkes emailed the Highways Agency to look out for the bear. A week later, they responded to say they had found 'old teddy'. The four-year-old was reunited with her teddy on her birthday at highway firm Carillion's offices in Cannock.

Mrs Jewkes, a legal secretary, said: "I couldn't believe it, and neither could Daisy. She was completely overwhelmed, her face light up when she got the bear back in the hands. She was crying her eyes out. Despite her having other bears, it was 'old teddy' she wanted."

David Smith, a manager at Carillion, washed the bear before arranging for Daisy to collect it. The little girl has written a letter of thanks to the company.

NEWS IN BRIEF

MP is in festive mood at new shop

MP Ian Austin enjoyed a mince pie and some mulled wine in Dudley town centre to celebrate the opening of a vintage shop.

Vintage Rose has been set up by Rose Cook and will feature local history as well as selling vintage clothes and furniture.

The Victorian-themed opening took place at the shop in Birdcage Walk off Castle Street. Carol singers were on hand to add to the festive mood.

The Dudley North Labour MP said: "It's always great to see new businesses opening in Dudley town centre."

Petition opposes store next to pub

AROUND 250 people have signed a petition in just the first few days since a meeting opposing plans to build a convenience store on the car park of a popular Cradley Heath pub.

Up to 20 jobs could be created by the business, which would be built beside the Haden Cross in Halesowen Road and run by The Co-Operative. But the scheme has sparked opposition from locals who fear it threatens the future of the pub and say parking provision is not sufficient.

Family flee from blaze in kitchen

A KITCHEN fire forced a family out of their home in Brierley Hill.

The fire started at the property on Foxdale Drive, at around 5.30pm on Sunday.

One crew from Brierley Hill fire station attended.

Crew Commander Tom Edwards said: "The fire was caused by fat from the grill pan which set the cooker alight. The fire was quickly extinguished."

Former doctor's surgery on market

A FORMER doctor's surgery in Dudley has gone up for sale, priced £250,000.

Kates Hill Surgery, in Wolverton Road, served 1,500 patients but closed last year after funding for the practice ran out. It had only opened in 2010.

The building, which has 10 parking spaces, has now been listed for sale by The Lee Shaw Partnership.

Air ambulance fair

A CHRISTMAS craft and table top fair will be held for the West Midlands Air Ambulance at St John's Church in Dudley Wood on Sunday from 11am-2pm.

Admission will be 20p on the door.

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THE tree fellers took down an old oak at the end of the road and invited us to help ourselves. So for the first time in years we hauled home ye old yule log and placed it by the front door as a sign of welcome. Snag is, people keep tripping over it, so it's not so much a yule log as a yule catch your foot on that log.

I HAVE decided to call our yule log The Miliband after Weir Ed was this week denounced by an unnamed posse of Labour malcontents. They claim he is "a liability on the doorstep."

I ADMIT our yule log cannot compete with the festive suggestion from BBC Gardener's World magazine - a wreath made of sprouts. I suggest you hang it on your door to greet visitors with the motto: "Look what the wind blew in."

MEANWHILE, from A Christmas Carol, published in 1843, Ebenezer Scrooge offers his thoughts on the Chancellor's 2014 autumn statement: "What's Christmas time for you but a time for paying bills without money?"

TWO of my neighbours with grandchildren have seen the new Paddington film and both report a) it is far too good for kids and b) when the film ended everyone applauded.

A READER reports the following: Cost of replacing broken zip in daughter's school skirt, £14. Cost of two new identical school skirts at local supermarket, £8. Thanks to globalisation, the old motto "make do and mend" has become make do and spend. It no longer makes sense to repair anything.

LORD Harries of Pentregarth, a senior bishop in the Church of England, says



Prince Charles's coronation service should have a reading from the Koran. It seems likely that invitations will be sent to Islamic, Hindu, Buddhist and Jewish leaders. But hell, why stop there? Let's have a coronation that fully reflects the diverse beliefs of this great nation. I want Shakers, Quakers, Scientists and druids. I want a flypast by elves and fairies, synchronised yoga by leprechauns and military drill by serried ranks of Jedi knights. I want

witches and pagans and a special Coronation promise by the tooth fairy, a recitation by Prince Charles' talking shrubs, a sermon for atheists by Richards Dawkins and a reading by Psychic Sally ("I'm getting someone called Victoria, your majesty. She says she's very proud of you"). I suspect Charles' reign will be a batty sort of affair so let's start as he means to go on.

APPARENTLY we haven't quite got Black Friday right. We Brits love to mimic the Yanks and we have managed to do the whooping, cheering, door ramming and fist-fighting for cut-price goods. But a reader who knows the States tells me in American cities it is traditional to carry your cut-price goods as far as your car where they are taken off you by armed gangs. Maybe we'll do that next year, eh? One reader finds nothing at all amusing in Black Friday. "If there was a food shortage now," she says, "there would be no orderly queues as during the Second World War, just anarchy."

"NOW regions demand the same powers as Scotland," trumpeted one headline this week on the alleged enthusiasm for devolved power in England. I don't know a single normal person who cares tuppence about it. On closer inspection, the "regions" demanding greater powers (according to the headline) turn out to be not normal people but council leaders. No surprises there. The eagerness of bigwigs to become even biggerwigs knows no bounds.

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Illegal immigrant 'left to carry can'

A VIETNAMESE 'gardener' caught fleeing from a cannabis farm in a former Dudley town centre shop is starting a two year and four month jail sentence.

Police uncovered a huge haul of cannabis plants in a raid on a disused hardware store in Wolverhampton Street on November 3.

Wolverhampton Crown Court heard that officers discovered more

than 500 plants being grown on the premises, explained Mr David Lees, prosecuting.

Tui Tran ran from the premises as police arrived and was chased into a nearby alleyway where he was arrested by officers. A second suspect was also detained at the scene and is due to appear in court on February 6.

Mr Lees said: "A very substantial

amount of drugs were being grown and it is estimated that one harvest would have produced 20 kilos of cannabis."

Police reckoned that with three crops a year the farm could have cultivated up to £500,000 worth of the drug.

Mr Simon Hanns, defending 30-year-old illegal immigrant Tran, said he had been smuggled into the

UK from Vietnam but now wanted to return home as quickly as possible.

Mr Hanns said: "He was promised £2,000 for looking after the plants but received nothing because the enterprise was rumbled by the police. Now he has been left to carry the can."

Tran admitted being involved in the production of cannabis.

Trust in move to ease hospital parking stress

TWO hundred extra parking spaces are planned for Russells Hall Hospital in a bid to ease the strain on patients, visitors and residents.

Bosses say they want to provide additional staff car parking on what is currently scrubland, owned by the managing trust at the rear of the site.

It is part of a plan which would see more parking spaces allocated to the public, freeing spaces for patients and visitors.

In a Care Quality Commission report published last week car parking was highlighted as an area which caused 'much stress' to patients.

Hospital trust chief executive Paula Clark said: "At times, parking is a problem. What we are trying to do is looking at ways to resolve it. We have talked to the council about having more staff car parking at the back.

"If we could get more more staff car parking on site, we could release more spaces for patients."

"However, these are very early discussions and we are still assessing its economic viability.

"Any decision on extra staff car parking will also be subject to a full environmental impact assessment and full planning application procedures."

Patients complain about the difficulty of finding spaces at the hospital. But the situation is also causing

By Alex Ross

a problem for nearby residents who say their roads are often clogged up with cars belonging to hospital visitors and staff.

Double yellow lines were painted along Abbotsford Drive following a petition signed by every resident on that road.

But a proposed one-year trial of a resident parking permit scheme was ditched. People complained about the cost of having a parking permit, which was proposed at £100.

Dudley Transport boss Councillor Khurshid Ahmed said: "The council has taken part in discussions with the NHS trust with a view to easing the parking problems around the hospital.

"We understand the trust will be investigating the potential to reorganise and expand off street parking facilities at the hospital site, which should significantly ease problems on the existing car parks and surrounding streets."

Power firm hire apprentices

A POWER company which manages electricity supplies to millions of homes and businesses in the Midlands has announced plans to take on 100 apprentices.

Western Power Distribution's recruitment drive is part of its 2015 apprenticeship campaign. A range of jobs will be on offer to trainees including joiners and fitters which will see recruits based at locations across the Midlands.

The company admitted that many of the apprentices would come as existing staff retire under the scheme.

Around 30 are expected to take up roles in the West Midlands, according to bosses.

Top of the chocs abroad



Louis Barnett, from Kinver, has found success abroad with his chocolate business

HE'S the young entrepreneur who started his chocolate company at the age of 12. Now Louis Barnett has had his business represented at an expo at Heathrow Airport alongside well-known British brands.

The 23-year-old from Kinver started his company Louis Barnett Chocolates after buying a book on making chocolate. He started making his chocolate treats for friends and family but his hobby grew and in 2005 Mr Barnett was able to start his company thanks to a £5,000 local grant.

The company's products are now stocked by such prestigious retailers as Selfridges and exports to places such as the United Arab Emirates, Mexico plus several European countries.

Mr Barnett said export was a huge part of his business and he believed more British firms should take advantage of this country's good reputation. "When you talk about British products abroad you see we have this amazing brand. People trust the products we export," he added.

Return of checks on speed near to schools

A SPEEDWATCH scheme returned to Dudley this week with a special focus on speeding around schools in the borough.

Volunteers were due to be out in force to record the speeds of drivers in busy areas of the borough.

Councillor Hemingsley said he did not want to reveal the location of the next speed-check so as not to tip drivers off but said he would welcome volunteers.

The latest speedcheck took place on Tuesday in Stourbridge.

Wordsley's Councillor Derrick Hemingsley said: "We will be putting our focus on schools in the borough at our speedwatches — as some of the results we have seen already are absolutely horrendous.

"What we are looking for is drivers carelessly using their phones as well as not wearing their seatbelts but the main concern is the speeds we are seeing drivers reach in school areas as well as their behaviour."

He said that there had been reports of one of the lollipop lady in the area getting abuse from drivers when she stops the traffic.

He added: "It is not just the way they drive but the way they act, which just isn't on."

Write way to sharpen skills

BUDDING writers of the future will get the chance to sharpen their skills at an event in Wolverhampton.

Writing West Midlands is hosting the creative group for young writers at Wolverhampton Art Gallery on Saturday.

The session is for youngsters aged from 12 to 16 and is being led by professional writer Elisabeth Charis.

The cost is £5 but places are limited.

People can book by visiting the website www.writingwestmidlands.org or by emailing joanne@writingwestmidlands.org

Right to rent law

A NEW law requiring landlords to check tenants have the right to live in the UK before letting property to them came into effect this month. The 'right to rent' law is being rolled out in Birmingham and the Black Country before the rest of the country.

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Frivolous 999 calls lead to warning

WEST Midlands Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust is running a campaign asking people to question whether their injury is an emergency before dialling 999.

Front-line staff are asking people to use the emergency number wisely. Audio clips will be released of real life inappropriate calls, showing when it's not appropriate to call 999.

Jenny Cocks, emergency operations centre commander in Brierley Hill, said: "When you call 999 the questions that we ask are vital for us to be able to get the right help, to the right people, as quickly as possible."

Forget

"We receive about 3,000 calls a day but unfortunately not all of these are appropriate for the ambulance service. Sometimes people do forget that 999 is for life threatening injuries and illnesses. Our call assessors also have to deal with verbal abuse and hoax calls which is disappointing when all they want to do is help people."

"While we're dealing with these calls there are less call assessors available to deal with that life-threatening emergency."

Burgers and beer at pub

A PUB in the heart of the borough's historic glass quarter has been given a makeover. The Glassworks in Wordsley, which had been closed for eight weeks, has re-opened as Generous George at The Glassworks with staff now gearing up for the festive season.

It has been refurbished by Marston's. There is also a pool area and a giant chair by the entrance.

The food menu at the pub on Audham Road, which is open from 9am, includes George's Chicken Shack and Build your Own Burger feature.

Free parking

PARKING charges will be suspended by Dudley Council at their car parks across the borough this Saturday and next Saturday. Councillor Khurshid Ahmed said: "We are doing all we can to help local people and businesses over the festive season."

'Don't block the gritters' plea to motorists



Transport boss Councillor Khurshid Ahmed

DRIVERS are being asked to think carefully about where they park in Dudley as the icy weather takes hold.

Gritting crews are out in force already as the temperature drops sharply. Crews went out twice in November and there are further trips planned.

Dudley Council say despite the weather crews are being forced away from smaller streets and side roads - because of bad parking.

Now, highway boss Councillor Khurshid Ahmed is urging people to think before they park to ensure gritters have full access to

streets, keeping them clear as the days get colder.

The cabinet member for transport said: "The gritting crews work all hours of the day and night in order to keep the majority of Dudley borough roads as far as possible for people to use."

Lorry

"There have been a number of roads where gritting vehicles have not been able to enter as badly parked vehicles blocked access. This has created difficulties in manoeuvring a heavy lorry carrying several

tonnes of grit. I hope that residents will work with us and will be considerate when parking so that the roads can be gritted and disruption can be minimised, during the bad weather."

In November crews used around 40 tonnes of grit per run. They will continue to monitor weather and respond when necessary.

Residents can keep up to date with news and information about the weather, including snow and ice updates, by visiting the council's Weather Watch page online at www.dudley.gov.uk

'Lawlessness' of the car cruisers comes under fire

THE judge who granted the Black Country injunction against boy racers said there appeared to be 'complete lawlessness' in the four boroughs over the issue.

Birmingham Civil Justice Centre heard this week how the injunction was sought because the police didn't have 'sufficient resources' to prosecute, making it difficult to bring car cruisers 'to book'.

Pair are in court after student dies

TWO men have appeared in court charged with causing the death by dangerous driving of university student Rebecca McManus, of Oldbury, at a bus stop on Hagley Road West.

Sukvinder Mannan, of Halesowen, and Inderjit Singh, of Wolverhampton, appeared at Sandwell Magistrates Court last week.

Former King Edward VI College Miss McManus died at the scene in Bearwood on May 31. A friend, also 21, was seriously hurt.

Both men are charged with causing death by dangerous driving and causing serious injury.

Adjourned

Singh 29, of Cranbourne Avenue, Ettingshall, is also accused of driving a vehicle that failed to stop after a road accident. Mannan, 32, of Roundhills Road, is separately charged with failing to provide a blood sample following the crashes.

Proceedings were adjourned and the men will appear at Wolverhampton Crown Court on February 24.

Grace celebrates her 100th birthday



With a photograph of herself when she was aged 19, centenarian Grace Morgan (nee Dando), of Upper Gornal

FORMER sewing machinist Grace Morgan has celebrated her 100th birthday surrounded by family, friends and neighbours at her home in Upper Gornal.

She was born on November 30, 1914 in Himley and lived on Dudley Road, with her parents and four younger siblings, Jack, Mary, George and Hilda, who she has now outlived.

Mrs Morgan, nee Dando, attended the Park School in Dudley which she left to work as a sewing machinist.

After meeting husband William in 1934, they married on March 14, 1936.

They lived on Club Row, Upper Gornal, and had two children, Robert and Michael.

Youngest son Michael said: "She does remember things from the past. She remembers very clearly when her family received a telegram to say that her brother, Jack, had been killed in action at the age of 21 during the Second World War."

Her husband died in 1968 when he

was 56. He had worked as a miner at Baggeridge.

Mrs Morgan has two grandchildren, Robert, 52 and Neil 48, two great-grandchildren, Daniel, 24 and Connie, three, and one great-great-grandchild Olivia, who is seven.

Her daughter-in-law Vivian said: "She did a lot of knitting and reading and has always been a very relaxed person." Husband Michael added: "She has never touched alcohol or a cigarette in her life."

Zoo's crane in breeding move

DUDLEY Zoo keepers are planning to introduce a one-year-old Demoiselle crane which was relocated from Sparsholt College, in Hampshire, to a male as part of a new breeding programme.

Bird keeper Ben Vanes said: "She stayed off show for three days, which was mainly due to the weather, and has now been moved to the first of the triple aviaries, near the otters, with a range of other birds."

"She's a little bit tentative at the moment as she gets used to the surroundings but she's settling in to her new home well."

Pharmacy needs to be discussed

RESIDENTS are invited to a meeting of the Dudley Health and Wellbeing Board next week

The meeting will take place at Lye Community Centre at Cross Walks on Tuesday from 3 to 5pm.

The meeting will be attended by local GPs, health commissioners, the police, council officers, councillors and members of the voluntary sector. Plans for the board's pharmaceutical needs assessment, which sets out pharmacy services, will be discussed.

Two hurt in car and van collision

TWO people were taken to hospital after a crash on Tipton Road, Dudley, last Thursday morning.

Ambulance crews were called to an accident involving a car and a van. A man and a woman in the car were taken to Russells Hall Hospital.

A three-year-old boy also in the vehicle was checked over by paramedics but did not need medical help. The van driver was not injured.

Camera in bid to stop drug dealing

A CCTV camera will be put up in a residential area of Dudley as part of a blitz on drug dealers.

Police have announced that the camera will be installed at a location near Blackacre Road this week. It will be operated by police staff.

Police have also stepped up patrols in a bid to reassure the public.

Carols are in store

THE Dudley Group NHS Charity is inviting people to join in a carol singing fundraising event in aid of its cancer appeal at the Sainsbury's store in Sandringham Way, Amblecote, on Saturday, 1pm to 3pm.

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IN MY VIEW

with Mark Andrews

THE Archbishop of Canterbury has come under fire for dabbling in politics regarding his comments about food banks in the UK. An MP warned the Most Rev Justin Welby that he ran the risk of becoming a pawn in a political game. I would perhaps be sympathetic to the MP's point, were the MP in question anyone other than David Mellor.

To be fair, as far as we know, he did resist from calling the Archbishop a "sweaty, stupid little s****", so clearly the man is learning. But I still do not think he is the man to be lecturing the Archbishop about matters of religion.

□□□□□

MEANWHILE, the Archbishop has also suggested we should do our Christmas shopping at charity shops. No doubt, most men will be nodding sagely in agreement, thinking this is an excellent piece of advice. Their wives may need a little more convincing.

□□□□□

OH, and if you didn't know Foggy is this year's winner of I'm A Celebrity. It's not the bloke off Last of the Summer Wine. No idea who he is, mind.

□□□□□

A Christmas card which listed '10 reasons by Santa Claus must live on a council estate' has been withdrawn from sale by Clinton Cards after sparking a storm of protests.

The reasons listed included "He has a serial record for breaking and entering", and "He only works once a year".

One indignant complainant labelled the card "seriously vile", another said it was "beyond offensive" while a third said it was "vilifying and stigmatising the poor for corporate gain".

Oh, do get over yourselves, please. Of course such stereotyping is unfair, and the card probably is in bad taste, but if we start directing so much anger at every dubious joke, what is left for the really serious stuff?

What are we going to ban next? Irish jokes? Mother-in-law gags? Benny out of Crossroads?

Let's face it, Black Country humour is based almost entirely on unfair and outdated stereotypes about flat-capped simpletons with funny accents, and we love 'em.

And earnest po-faced people who use such pompous phrases as 'stigmatising the poor for corporate gain' are invariably the sort of people who hold such prejudices against ordinary people who do not share their supposedly enlightened attitudes. If they met a real Black Country man, they would doubtless find him uncouth and politically incorrect, in need of 'educating' in the ways of modern metropolitan Britain.

Well, yo've gorra loff, as we say in the Black Country.



A stray horse along Russell's Hall Road, Dudley



Horses round up in Wolverhampton Road East, Sedgley



A bleeding Staffordshire bull terrier injured in Walsall

Owners get a kick out of cruel sport

Fears over fighting dogs and stray horses have been raised by the RSPCA. SIMON STONE reports

IT is part of the shady underworld of the Black Country, where criminals put their dogs' lives on the line in the name of sport.

Dogs are bought and sold, bred and trained all so that callous owners can get a kick from dog fighting.

And, says the RSPCA, the region has seen 'more than its fair share' of cases. Ian Briggs, chief inspector with the RSPCA special operations unit, has been working on dog fighting cases for 15 years and is in no doubt it still goes on.

"Since 2006, the West Midlands has really had more than its fair share of 'dog fighting cases,'" he said. "There have definitely been dog fights held in Wolverhampton and other areas of the Black Country as well."

One high-profile case, in 2008, saw Stephen Wood from Walsall convicted of having four pit bull dogs for the purpose of training them for fighting.

Abandoned

In 2010, dog fighting was said to be on the rise in the Black Country after a spate of seriously injured dogs were found abandoned.

A dog believed to have been beaten to death was found dead under a paving slab in Chaucer Road, Bloxwich in January, while a bleeding Staffordshire bull terrier called Honey limped into a Walsall tyre and exhaust unit in Fryers Road, Bloxwich, after being badly injured in a dog fight weeks later.

A two-year-old female Staffie-type was found dying on a towpath in Bentley, and a dog named Rocky suffering from 'the worst case of neglect' ever seen by local vets was rescued from Churchill



Richard Marshall with trees used to train fighting dogs in Bearwood Park

Road in Bentley. Elsewhere, a dead Staffordshire bull terrier was found in a box in Newhall Road, Rowley Regis, while a dead pit bull terrier covered in blood was dumped on a busy street in Smethwick.

Concerns have also been raised that thugs are training fighting dogs in Black Country parks. Chunks of bark have been ripped off trees in King George V playing fields in Bloxwich and in Bearwood Park.

Other concerns relate to stray horses, often left to fend for themselves on

verges and scrubland, chained to trees and stakes in all weathers. Sometimes they are left to die.

Horses have been found dead, in poor condition and even literally frozen to their spot by chains around their necks in the winter. There is also the illegal act of fly-grazing, leaving horses to graze on someone else's land.

Sandwell councillor Ian Jones said: "There have been cases of horses frozen to the spot by their chain. We have had fly-grazed horses choking on their chains and have had to be rescued."

Horses can also create problems for pedestrians and drivers if they escape and make their way onto footpaths and roads.

Since 2011, more than 460 horses have been removed from public highways in Dudley alone, with the council spending £100,000 on removing them.

This year eight horses were rounded up by police after they wandered on to grassland in Wolverhampton and were agitated by traffic. The animals were herded onto the forecourt of a petrol station in Wolverhampton Road East, Sedgley.

In February, two caused a stir when they were seen near the ring road on Penn Road in Wolverhampton.

The most recent action in Dudley was taken in October when two horses were seized from council-owned land off Bryce Road, in Brierley Hill. The council also posts enforcement notices, warning anyone who may leave their horses on council-owned land that their animals may be impounded.

Tethered

In Sandwell, more than 100 horses have been removed by the council in the past three years, and the authority has spent tens of thousands of pounds on bailiffs to enforce the policy.

Pat McFadden, Wolverhampton South East MP says existing legislation does not go far enough, and that authorities do not get enough support from the government. He claimed horses were being found dead tethered to posts, or were left in such bad condition they had to be put down.

However Councillor Jones said that healthy horses impounded in Sandwell will not be put to sleep, instead being found new homes and even being used by riding schools.

Gemma Stanford, of the British Horse Society, said fly-grazing had become a massive issue across the country and the BHS has been pushing for new, tougher, new legislation.

WEEK IN POLITICS

with Daniel Wainwright

TRY as they might, politicians can't seem to convince people of the benefits of the Black Country and Birmingham teaming up.

UKIP came in for some heavy criticism when it organised a 'hands off the Black Country' protest. Whether you're of the view they're just standing up for people's shared identity or opportunistically hopping on a bandwagon, they would only be able to do so if there was an undercurrent of concern.

It might be fear of the unknown. It might be lack of trust in politicians. It could be a belief this is only the beginning of a big Brum takeover. I don't think for a second it is but there's no getting away from genuine fears held by a lot of people.

Labour councillors have been stressing there is nothing to worry about but perception is everything. For years, the feeling has been Birmingham has done well for investment, while the Black Country has been left with the crumbs off the table.

The combined authority technically already exists. There's a West Midlands Integrated Transport Authority. That covers the four Black Country boroughs and Birmingham, who are signed up to the combined authority plan, plus Coventry and Solihull, who the others are trying to persuade to join them.

All that's really going to be different is the venue they meet at and possibly the councillor chairing it. We've had joint working on transport for years and it's never been as big a political hot potato as this authority, which is also going to look at regeneration and job creation.

Part of the problem has been the name. I don't just mean the toxic idea of Greater Birmingham, which politicians have correctly consigned to the bin. I mean the legal terms being used - 'combined authority'.

'Combined' means to join or merge to form a single unit. That's something the Labour leaders swear won't happen to their respective councils. An 'authority' is something with political or administrative power and control. Councillors are adamant there will be no new layer of bureaucracy, administration or bureaucrats. To all intents and purposes, then, it's a group of people who get together every so often, have a meeting and discuss common aims.

But it's also a mechanism to use whatever powers might be offered to the West Midlands through devolution. Failure to have the authority set up means we could fall further behind the likes of Greater Manchester.

Many people aren't comfortable in that they don't yet know what is being signed up to on their behalf. The combined authority has, by necessity, been set up quickly. But in order to avoid losing the support of the people it was created to serve, it has to show itself to be democratic and accountable.

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money, although that obviously helps. Many tradespeople have struggled since last year and I honestly feel that during the good times a minority perhaps didn't focus on customer care as much as they should have done.

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Cloudy2Clear service Wolverhampton and the surrounding

area and Brian is finding that his approach is a major factor in his success. 'The truth is that it's not just the personal satisfaction that I get from doing a good job but also it makes good business sense. I get a huge amount of business from friends and family of people

I've done work for, which just goes to show how much a little bit of effort is appreciated.'

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Mortgages — borrowers must see sense

RECENT articles state that on the back of new legislation regarding borrowing — making sure people can afford the debt — it is now becoming difficult for people over 40 to take out a new mortgage. This seems to come over as a shock when I would have thought it was common sense.

We made our last house move when I was 38 and one of the reasons for doing it then was that, if we left it much longer, we would be too old to take on a 25 year mortgage. That was way back in 1985. So what has changed? Yes, people will be working a cou-

ple of years longer, if their job still exists, but who in their right minds wants to commit to a large monthly outgo when they no longer have a proper income.

Maybe the minority who have a guaranteed final salary pension might feel comfortable, but even these things could disappear if insufficient money is coming in to fund them. It is another case of irresponsible lending, and borrowers not taking responsibility for their own finances.

R WILLIAMS
Brierley Hill

Merry Hill congestion

ON reading about 'Merry Hell' traffic, it isn't only this time of year that there are traffic problems in and around the shopping centre.

Pensnett Road into Brierley Hill is a disaster, what with no turn-offs.

Then they make High Street, Brockmoor, one-way from the bridge, causing traffic problems in Hickman Road. It used to be a quiet road.

The people who design these road systems don't live anywhere near to them.

The only road to Round Oak is through a council estate where children are prone to the dangers posed by more traffic.

Traffic lights are everywhere in the borough, causing more havoc.

M HAYES
Kingswinford

Slaves in the 21st Century

SLAVERY in modern Britain is a national scandal. There are an estimated 13,000 slaves in Britain today. There should be a witch hunt throughout the country to find out where all of these slaves are. No stone should be left unturned.

Every citizen in this country who has suspicions of anyone living near them where this could be happening should report it to the police. They should be freed and the slave masters put behind bars for a very long time. How on earth can we allow this to go on?

B WHITEHOUSE
Kingswinford

On way to becoming 51st state

WHY have we gone America crazy? We are hearing more and more American customs slowly coming into everyday uses and no one is challenging the introduction of these matters.

We now have commissioners, CSI, mayors, primary elections for a local MP, Halloween and Trick or Treat. We have heard politicians talking about a 'senate', I have heard in TV sales using the word 'fall' for autumn sales. TV series are now being called seasons. Now we are hearing thanksgiving, in TV advertising we are having Black Friday.

I suspect that before too long our politicians will be called senators the prime minister a president and so on and so forth.

Are we that involved with America that we have to take and use their customs and sayings? Come on Britain, please wake up and see what is happening, let us stop this before it is too late or are we to become the 51st state!

P LOWE
Brierley Hill

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

POST

Dudley Chronicle,
Chronicle Editorial,
51-53 Queen Street,
Wolverhampton, WV1 1ES

Letters should be brief and MUST include name, address and telephone number. The Editor reserves the right to condense letters.

E-MAIL

Dudley.chrons@
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Christianity is not just for Christmas

RE — the letters regarding 'Songs of Praise'.

I thank God for the people who through the ages have wrote lovely words and music, for the wonderful hymns we sing today.

As for church attendance decreasing? Churches are always ready to welcome you at any time of the year, not just for baptising, weddings or funerals.

Sometimes we get a full congregation for these services, but do they come again?

The reason? Sunday shopping, football, boot sales, etc, seem to come first.

Thousands signed for the mosque not to be built in Dudley, who, probably say their faith is C of E, or whatever, but do not support their own churches.

So when the few elderly people who do attend have passed away, there will be more Christian churches closing.

Come on all Christians, live a Christian life, teach your children, put God first, not worldly goods and pleasure.

Jesus said 'Love your God first, then love your neighbour as yourself'.

These two commandments cover all of the Ten Commandments we were taught earlier in the Bible.

To end my letter, you are all welcome to come along and sing with us, those wonderful 'Hymns of Praise'.

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A natural history of Christmas

Wolverhampton Women's Luncheon Club

THERE were 80 members present at the November 26 meeting at The Lindens, Tettenhall Road, together with 13 guests and the speaker Dr Michael Leach.

After welcoming everyone, the chairman asked for a short silence in memory of Margaret Arnold, a past member, who died recently.

She then said Grace. The menu was celery and stilton soup, roast turkey with trimmings, Christmas pudding with brandy sauce, tea or coffee with mints and mince pies.

After the lunch, Susan introduced Dr Leach, a zoologist, full-time wildlife author and photographer. The title of his talk was 'The Natural History of Christmas'. He said there is not sufficient evidence to guess with any accuracy the year of Jesus' birth, although it seems it was somewhere between 7 BC and 2 AD.

He said the modern Christmas started with the Victorians and explained the origins of mistletoe and the yule log and the introductions of mince pies, turkey and Brussels sprouts.

He concluded by referring to the 'The Twelve days of Christmas'. Suzanne Morgan gave the vote of thanks.

The AGM will be held on Wednesday, January 28. Only paid up members should attend. The menu for the next luncheon will be cream of asparagus soup, pork in red wine, lemon sponge and custard.

Popular guest gives an enthralling talk



Luncheon club Chairman Mary Jones, left, with guest speaker Sue Clegg

Dudley South Ladies Luncheon Club

THE club enjoyed an excellent November lunch at the Kingfisher Hotel, Wall Heath.

This was followed by a popular return visit from Sue Clegg whose talk "Waterborne in the Grenadines" enthralled members for 45 minutes.

Sue is a retired policewoman who is an expert on finger printing.

She received a Gold Award from the Duke of Edinburgh in 1970 and when she retired she was interviewed successfully along with other Gold achievers to form a team of six.

They were trained and sent out to the Caribbean islands to join award winners selected from other countries in order to promote and introduce young people to the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme.

The team found themselves "waterborne"

on the "Grenadine Star" sailing out to the Grenadines with basic supplies in their back-packs and two dinghies.

On arrival, they all ran into the blue sea and invited the young people to join them. No one followed. Not one youngster could swim. Eventually the team took them to an uninhabited island for a 24-hour survival test which ended in helping rescue survivors from an air crash.

This flight between islands had ended in disaster but as a result the youngsters achieved their Duke of Edinburgh award. Sue now travels throughout the world promoting the award scheme.

Cast sails good ship lollipop

GREAT Wyrley Towns-

women Guild presented an

old time variety concert at Great Wyrley Methodist Church.

It was staged to raise funds for their chosen charity, which this year is Acorns children's hospice

in Walsall. The concert was

compared by the wonderful Leonard Sachs, aka Pauline Benton.

The show comprised a mixture of comedy acts that included sketches, songs

and sing-a-long in the old music hall style.

Songs included Underneath the Lamplight, Oh You Beautiful Doll and Good Ship Lollipop. The final was a We'll Meet again.

A good time was had by all.

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Civic leaders attack UKIP over identity protest

UKIP has been accused of misleading the public over the threat posed by a Birmingham and Black Country combined authority.

The party's West Midlands MEP Bill Etheridge called on bosses at Dudley Council to delay work on the deal until the plan's implications had been fully discussed.

Mr Etheridge, who is also a councillor for Sedgley, said local people had not been given the chance to express their views.

The scheme will see Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton councils team up with Birmingham on issues which cross their borders.

Bosses have stressed the move will not see councils merge or lead to the creation of a Greater Birmingham.

Protected

Newly-appointed Dudley Council leader Peter Lowe has slammed UKIP's claims that a combined authority would damage local democracy and threaten the Black Country's identity. Speaking during Dudley Council's full council meeting, he said: "Let's get one thing straight. The Black Country's identity will be protected. Dudley will be protected. Each and everyone of our diverse communities will be protected."

"And the interesting thing is, UKIP know it, but they have deliberately misled those people up there in the public gallery - shame on them."

Council leaders in the five districts want to set up a combined authority to take on powers which may be devolved from London.

About 30 people gathered outside the council offices before the meeting to take part in a UKIP-led protest called Hands off Birmingham and Hands off the Black Country.

Sedgley-based Mr Etheridge, who will be his party's candidate in Dudley



UKIP organised a protest over fears that Brum could dominate the Black Country

North at next year's General Election and is a West Midlands MEP, argued that there was more to the plan than just working together.

"This is changing the way local government works in the West Midlands and there will be people protesting across the region. We don't have to go down that route. Let's set the example and have an open debate."

Other councillors slammed the UKIP group for failing to turn up to a meeting of party leaders.

Conservative group leader Patrick

Harley said: "If you had been sensible you would have found out what this is not about. It is not about Greater Birmingham. It is about joint working in the Black Country."

Councillor Darren Cooper, Labour leader of Sandwell Council, said: "I cannot see what it is that UKIP are opposed to. No-one is going to lose their identity. We will not become part of any Greater Birmingham."

"This is about councils working together on matters that go across local authority boundaries. That's all."

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Congratulations to school for its rapid improvement

DORMSTON School has been taken out of special measures by Ofsted, with inspectors saying it's making 'rapid improvements'.

Congratulations to Head Teacher Ben Stitchman, his staff, the governors, parents, pupils and everyone else who has helped keep their promise to get the school out of special measures in a year. I am sure the school will continue to improve in the future.

This improvement shows that with the right leadership schools in Dudley can do just as well as those anywhere else'.

Last week's Autumn Statement just proved that David Cameron and George Osborne have failed every test and broken every promise they've made on the economy.

They promised we'd all be in this together but then they gave millionaires a huge tax cut.

They promised people would be better off but long-term youth unemployment in Dudley is twice the national average and local people are now £1,600 a year worse off.

They promised to balance the books, but with tax revenues down because wages are falling they are nowhere near keeping this promise either.

The Tories just don't understand the fundamental link between the living

THE WAY I SEE IT



**Dudley North
Labour MP Ian
Austin takes
the stand in our
weekly Chronicle
column which
gives our local
representatives
the chance to air
their views**

'This improvement shows that with the right leadership schools in Dudley can do just as well as those anywhere else'

standards of everyday working people in Dudley and Britain's ability to deal with the deficit.

George Osborne has now borrowed a staggering £219 billion more than he planned and the economy is set to slow down next year after forecasts for wages have been revised down again. Yet the Chancellor still tries to claim that the economy is fixed and his plan is working. How out of touch can you get?

What we need is a plan that supports people in Dudley as well as the economy as a whole. I want a fairer minimum wage, more free childcare for working parents, an end to the bedroom tax and cuts to business rates for small firms.

In just two weeks over a thousand people have backed my campaign to keep Dudley Police Station open to the public.

Now local former police officers are speaking up on the issue too. Roger Bagley, a former Superintendent in Dudley Police, told me that "a town the size of Dudley must have a police station that's open to the public. It's part of having a strong, visible police presence in the town to deter crime and give the public confidence in the police. That's why this campaign is so important."

I completely agree. People with frontline experience of policing in Dudley are backing my campaign because these cuts will mean fewer police on the streets, fewer

offenders brought before court and fewer criminals put in jail. Please sign my petition by visiting www.ianaustin.co.uk.

When me or a member of my family is ill, we queue up at Russells Hall like anybody else in Dudley, so I'm really concerned by a new report highlighting shortcomings at the hospital.

The official report rates staff care and leadership at the hospital as good but raises concerns about safe staffing levels, saying "the trust must ensure that staffing levels and cover for vacant shifts is satisfactory".

Doctors, nurses and other staff are working flat out at Russells Hall but the government has squandered £3 billion on reorganising the NHS instead of supporting them. As a result Russells Hall is facing a £12 million deficit, job cuts and rising waiting times. The Tories need to get a grip on their finances and give frontline staff the support they need.

One of the nicest things about my job is judging the Christmas card competition. My desk is piled up with brightly-coloured cards designed by kids at local primary schools and I have the difficult task of choosing a winner. The standard was higher than ever but an entry from Ellie Durnall, of Milking Bank Primary School, stood out. She drew a brilliant picture of Santa flying over Dudley Castle with animals at the zoo dressed up for Christmas. The card will soon be finding its way to thousands of people including the Queen.

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Couple's bid for a Christmas chart hit



Singer-songwriter duo, and husband and wife, Abby Scott and Chris Eaton from Kinver with the single

A HUSBAND and wife team from Kinver are hoping to top the charts this Christmas after producing song in memory of fallen soldiers.

Musicians Chris Eaton and Abby Scott, from the village near Stourbridge, composed the piece after being inspired by stories of the First World War.

The song, 1914 — The Carol of Christmas, has already reached the top of the iTunes Christmas chart and now the couple hope to reach an even wider audience.

All money raised through sales of the song, composed by 56-year-old Mr Eaton, who wrote Cliff Richard's Christmas hit Saviour's Day alongside Judd Field, will go to Armed Forces charities.

Mrs Scott, 29, has a solo on the single and forms part of an ensemble of voices and soloists including Flight Lieutenant Matt Little and 12-year-old Canterbury Cathedral chorister and Radio 2's Young Chorister of the Year finalist, William Inscow.

Wood products company set to expand further

A STOURBRIDGE business that makes wooden products for the pub and restaurant trade is expanding by almost doubling its manufacturing space.

The Porter and Woodman Group, which makes a range of goods including chalkboards, menu holders and wood shop fittings, has agreed a 10-year lease a unit on the Stourbridge Estate with London & Cambridge Properties, which owns and manages the estate.

The 10,626 sq ft unit, which was refurbished by LCP prior to the company moving in, complements its existing 12,537 sq ft space elsewhere on the estate.

Mike Hodgetts, sales

and marketing director for the Porter and Woodman Group, said the expansion meant it has now been able to bring back in-house the other side of its enterprise — a hamper and wine gifts company, which also incorporates packing and distribution.

He said, "We found that it would be better for us if we took back control of that part of the business."

The success of the group is such that it has taken on 25 new staff over the past three years, taking employee numbers to 60, and Mr Hodgetts anticipates its workforce to increase by another 20 per cent over the next couple of years.

SOME 4,000 blood donations are needed across the West Midlands over Christmas, health chiefs have revealed.

A campaign has now been launched to encourage people to give blood in the coming weeks.

This year, as Christmas Day and Boxing Day fall ahead of a weekend, there are worries that fewer donors than usual will get around to making life saving donations.

Across the West Midlands there are over 50,000 registered blood donors.

In total, around 210,000 whole blood donations and 12,500 platelet donations will be needed across England and North Wales over the coming six weeks to help ensure hospitals have the stocks they need to treat patients. Last year one in five donors missed their appointments — putting NHS Blood and Transplant's critical operation under unnecessary pressure.

By Simon Stone

Shailesh Mistry, deputy marketing manager at NHS Blood and Transplant said: "At a time when everyone is thinking about the perfect gift for their loved ones, some people will be relying on one gift that really matters — the gift of blood."

Improve

"We're asking new and regular donors in the West Midlands to give blood this December. The gift of a single blood donation can save or improve up to three lives."

"Don't worry if you've never given blood before — now is a great time to sign up and start giving to help save lives this Christmas and beyond."

Health chiefs say every blood donation is vital, but over winter months there is a particular need to ensure supplies of rarer blood groups. In particular, O Rh negative, the universal blood group, is always in demand and A Rh negative, B Rh negative and AB Rh negative are the other rare groups most vulnerable to shortfall.

A single blood donation can save or improve up to three lives while every platelet donation helps up to three adults or 12 children.

As blood has a shelf life of 35 days and platelets have a shelf life of seven days, it is essential that stocks are continually maintained throughout the year, including during the festive period.

Officials also say it is important blood donations represent the country's diverse population. Some rare blood groups and some blood disorders are more common among ethnic communities.

To book an appointment or to find out where your nearest session is being held visit www.blood.co.uk or call 0300 123 2323.

Major projects get green light from leaders

A SECOND wave of major housing, transport and job creation schemes across the Black Country are set to get the green light in February.

The news comes after the first schemes under the area's £138 million Government-backed Growth Deal were given the go ahead, with work due to start on many of them in the next few months.

Now the rest of the schemes, part of a £450 million investment in a Black Country 'renaissance', are also set for approval. It will mean dates are set for work to start on all the schemes, with set targets for when they are due to be completed and the benefits the area should expect.

The first wave was

signed off last Wednesday by the joint committee of the Local Enterprise Partnership, made up of leaders of the four Black Country councils. It includes major expansion at Halesowen and Dudley colleges, further investment in Walsall's Goscote housing project and the improvements to the Civic Halls and Grand Theatre in Wolverhampton.

The second wave is set to be signed off in February. The move was agreed in principle at last week's meeting and paves the way for the organisation to meet its target of having the programme ready to start on April 1 next year.

One of the biggest schemes is the widening of Junction 10 of the M6 at Walsall.

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Pioneer journalist has died aged 83

BLACK Country-born journalist John Beck, who helped found the Shropshire Star in 1964, has died aged 83

A FORMER Dudley Grammar School boy who went on to be one of the founding pioneers of the Shropshire Star, John Beck, has died at the age of 83.

Mr Beck, of Condover, near Shrewsbury, retired in 1991 after a journalistic career of nearly 33 years with the Midland News Association, during which he worked on several different titles including the Chronicle.

His interests in retirement included photography and foreign travel. He had a lifelong love of classical music, and also wrote an autobiography called "Perhaps I'm Really Mervyn Davenport," the story behind the title going back to the day of his birth in 1931.

School

"Mrs Beck had gone in a nursing home in Tipton. The lady in the next bed had a little boy on the same day called Mervyn Davenport," said John's widow, Jean Mary Beck.

"Both John's family and Mervyn's family moved away from Tipton into Coseley and John and Mervyn went to the same school. As a teenager, when he was playing up a bit, mum Beck used to say 'I think they gave me the wrong baby at that nursing home. You must be Mervyn Davenport.' And that stuck."

The book largely focused on his childhood in the Black Country and his early years of journalism, which were broken by a spell of National Service.

She and John married in 1959 but had known each other from an early



Tipton-born journalist John Beck was a keen cyclist and a member of Dudley Cyclists Touring Club

age. "We lived next door to each other from when I was aged three in Woodsetton, just outside Sedgley. My maiden name is Spicer," she said.

The couple had sons Christopher and Michael, both of whom predeceased them.

"In the last three years I have lost all three men in my life," said Mrs Beck.

John had had a stroke last year and went to the Vicarage Care Home in Bayston Hill and died there.

"He was very happy. They really looked after him so well at Bayston Hill."

The funeral is at noon next Friday (December 19) at Emstrey Crematorium, Shrewsbury.

Born in Park Lane, Tipton, John Cyril Beck went to Dudley Grammar School in 1942 and in September 1947 began working at the Herald Press in the town in the proof reading room.

After nine months an urgent plea to editor Norman Braithwaite coincided with a vacancy in the Brierley Hill office of the County Advertiser and he began one of the happiest times of his career, making calls on his trusty bicycle and becoming familiar with all the short cuts through places like Pensnett, Quarry Bank, Kingswinford, Wordsley and Amblecote.

"I was known to every parson and policeman in the area," he was to recall.

In September 1951 he journeyed to RAF Padgate for two years' National Service. On his return to civilian life in 1953 he was back into journalism and was soon writing for the Express & Star in the Stafford office where he took over coverage of theatre productions.

Later he worked in Bilston before becoming deputy editor of the Wolverhampton Chronicle. He and his wife moved to Condover when he joined the team led by first editor Ted Ireland to launch the Shropshire Star in 1964, where he was features editor.

A spell followed with the Birmingham Post and Mail before he returned to the Express & Star as assistant features editor. He finished his career by returning to the Chronicle, where he was deputy editor.

In his younger days John was a keen cyclist and a member of Dudley Cyclists Touring Club. He was for a time on the committee of Condover village hall and used to organise a fundraising annual ball.

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Panto magic for lights switch-on at Brierley Hill



It's Christmas, oh yes it is with panto cast members Sylv Hickling, Rebecca Thorne, Zara Rose and Holly Bagnall FESTIVE cheer arrived in Brierley Hill with the big Christmas lights switch-on.

The Deputy Mayor and Mayoress of Dudley, Councillor Steve Waltho and his wife Jayne were on hand to hit the switch with the help of none other than Father Christmas himself.

Hundreds turned out including the cast of Brierley Hill Musical Theatre Company's production of Dick Whittington in full costume to help out with the festivities.

Jo Gresswell, from the company, said: "It was such a brilliant night and

a great event that we love to take part in every year. There was a fantastic turnout and it really brings the community together."

The theatre company has been a regular feature at the Brierley Hill switch-on for the past four years.

"The cast had a lot of fun," Mrs Gresswell, who lives in Kingswinford, said. "They performed some of the songs from the show and also a few popular hits, which people loved."

Mrs Gresswell was also joined by students from The Bromley Pensnett Primary School, where she works.

"The kids had so much fun," she

added. "They had been rehearsing since September and did a brilliant job."

The company's production of Dick Whittington opens on January 10 and runs until the 17th.

Councillor Waltho said: "It was a brilliant community event with a fantastic turnout. The pantomime cast and the children's choir were great and I think people really enjoyed it."

"It was a brilliant start to Christmas for the people of Brierley Hill."

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Young readers booked their place to win final



Book a prize — the winning team of youngsters from The Ridge Primary School with their trophy and medals

PUPILS at a school in Stourbridge have proven themselves the best with books after winning a quiz on what they had read.

Youngsters in Years 5 and 6 represented The Ridge Primary School, Wollaston, in the annual Primary School Book Quiz.

They saw off six other primary schools in three heats for Stourbridge before six pupils from The Ridge went on to compete in the final. Other finalists were The Glynne Primary School,

Kingswinford, and Newfield Park Primary, Halesowen.

After they proved their knowledge and teamwork skills, the Wollaston pupils bagged themselves the win.

Headteacher Mrs Deb Hudson, said: "I am incredibly proud of our students. They worked very hard to learn as much as they could to win the contest."

The rounds were hosted by the School Library Service, which helps to promote reading in schools across the Dudley borough and requested that students studied six books and their authors.

During the heats and final they were asked very detailed questions about each book and author, meaning they needed to know each book inside out.

Mrs Hudson added: "They were all so extremely dedicated. They stayed after school once a week to have a study group on the books with a teacher. Both parents and teachers have been so supportive. Now have these role models in the school, hopefully their win will encourage more of our students to read."

The pupils were each awarded an individual medal, books, a bag and a trophy to take back to the school.

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Wagner is back with new single... and hair



Hair today — X Factor star Wagner, who has a new song out, at home in Halesowen after his hair transplant

X Factor runner-up Wagner Fiuza-Carrilho, who many will remember for his eccentric performances on the top TV show, is back with a new single — and thicker hair.

The flamboyant Brazilian-born singer, who lives in Halesowen, took up a career as a tattooist in Kingswinford after his time in the limelight thanks to The X Factor in 2010.

Wagner, remembered for his enthusiastic performances of songs such as Ricky Martin's She Bangs and the B52s' Love Shack, has released a new single Switched on like a Radio. "I am very excited about the single," said the 58-year-old. "On the X Factor I did a lot of covers and to be quite honest I was very sick of singing other people's songs and that was where Switched On Like a Radio came from."

The single is not the only new thing about the singer, who had a hair transplant earlier this year. He said: "I love to perform but noticed my hair was a real mess, and this affected my confidence. I like to take pride in my appearance and keep fit with martial arts. What's the point in working out and having a mutilated head? That is how I saw it."

Group call for better weekend rail service

CAMPAIGNERS are demanding action on 'overcrowded' trains during weekend services through the Black Country, particularly during the run up to Christmas as Birmingham attracts millions of visitors to its German Christmas market.

Members of the Stourbridge Line User Group say train operators should be looking to ease crowding on trains.

By Andrew Turton

The group has approached train operator London Midland calling for them to add more carriages during and after the run up to Christmas and New Year.

Operator London Midland said many of its trains have already been lengthened to allow for more passengers at weekends — a move the group want to see extended into the New Year. User group chairman Rob Hebron said demand was outstripping supply and called on train operators to act.

"It's bad enough that weekday commuters have to put up with overcrowded trains but at weekends the frequency of trains on the Stourbridge line is not good enough, neither are trains with two carriages," he said. "London Midland is pro-

moting the service of up to six trains an hour to Birmingham on billboards, which only applies Mondays to Saturdays.

Group member Bob Randle added: "Trains have been reported 'full and standing' on the London Midland website but anyone passing by Tyseley sidings can often see vehicles sat idle at weekends."

London Midland spokesman Francis Thomas said: "We are experiencing high levels of demand on the Stourbridge line at weekends. This is being driven by the Christmas markets at Worcester and Birmingham. We have been responding to this by lengthening as many trains as we can at weekends."

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Housing group launch a £500k social fund



Investing in skills for youth — Black Country Housing Group chief Amanda Tomlinson with apprentices

A COST-SAVINGS programme at the Black Country Housing Group (BCHG) is to raise £500,000 over three years for community projects and new social enterprises.

Chief executive Amanda Tomlinson said that £165,000 a year was being identified by staff at the not-for-profit organisation, which employs around 200 people.

Blackheath-based BCHG will use the funds in the local community to fund apprenticeships for young people

and build skills through its 'Young Blood' initiative. This aims to double the proportion of younger people in the housing group's workforce, under the age of 25, from five per cent to 10 per cent by 2017.

BCHG also intends to create two social enterprises, to support local community projects and fund local job clubs, as well as a hardship fund for vulnerable customers.

BCHG, now in its 40th year, operates primarily in Dudley and Sandwell but also has homes in Birmingham and Walsall. It currently provides more than 2,000 homes and supports

more than 13,000 people with employment advice, care, support and home improvements. It has contracts with local authorities to provide home improvement and maintenance work as well as running care homes.

Amanda Tomlinson, who took over the £13 million a year business as chief executive a year ago, said surpluses were reinvested into the business to fund growth. It has just secured £12 million of private sector lending to fund new housebuilding — around 200 new homes — and the creation of two care homes in the Dudley area for 130 people with dementia.

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Eliza and Thomas Tinsley, of the hugely successful Eliza Tinsley firm now based in Wednesbury, had The Limes built on the grounds of a former pub in Sedgley-Upper Gornal 163 years ago.

Over the years the building has been used by the Catholic Church, local councils and even became the headquarters of the Auxiliary Fire Service during the Second World War.

Thirty years after Eliza Tinsley died, the house was taken over by three other illustrious figures — Henry Fowler, an iron and coal master from Bilston, William Arthur Foster, a solicitor, and finally Eliza Gibbons, widow of John Lloyd Gibbons of Ellowes Hall.

MEMORY LANE

By Charlie Benton

After the turn of the 20th Century, it was used by the Catholic Archdiocese of Birmingham before being used as the Fire watchers used the home's high tower to scan the neighbourhood to spot incendiaries dropped as markers by the Luftwaffe.

After the war, the home was used by Sedgley Urban District Council, then Dudley Metropolitan Council before being taken over by two private firms.

The house has now been converted into eight flats and now historians keen not to forget the building's proud history have unveiled an interpretation board telling its story.

One of the historians who gathered the information for the board, Martin Jones, said: "I am a parishioner of the nearby All Saints Church which is the church which Eliza Tinsley used to attend.

"I also used to pass the building every day whilst taking my children to school which was my only real association with the building."

"When I saw there were moves to restore it I made enquiries and started to compile the history of the building which is how I became involved."

Mr Jones was just one of many budding historians who contributed to the information board.

Converted

Although the building has now been converted into flats Mr Jones said he is pleased with it.

"I think the developers did a wonderful job," Mr Jones said. "Other than the demolition of the outbuildings to make room for some extra buildings, the building itself remains identical to the way it would have looked in Eliza Tinsley's day."

"It really is one of the last remaining important buildings in Sedgley and I think it is wonderful that it has been preserved for the future."



Eliza Tinsley - matriarch of the chain making iron master family

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Pair are fined for wasting police time

A MOTHER and son who lied that they had been robbed in a bid to cash in on compensation to pay their rent have been fined.

The 55-year-old woman and 22-year-old man from Brierley Hill planned to claim £570 they said had been stolen from them at knife point. But their robbery story was rumbled as investigating officers became suspicious of inconsistencies and inaccuracies in their tales.

The man walked into Brierley Hill police station's front office reporting that a bundle of cash had been stolen following an attack by two men. Initially it appeared his limited recollection of the robbery could have been down to an injury but police said it became clear he was making the story up.

He first claimed two men, armed with a knife and knuckle duster, had stolen the cash, then denied having seen a weapon.

Three hours after walking into the station the pair were handed a fixed penalty notice of £90 each for wasting police time.

Detective Chief Inspector Phil Dolby said: "False reports of this nature, or those made via the 999 system, deflect police resources and time away from people in genuine need of assistance or those who are reporting serious crimes.

"While we understand that in the run up to Christmas some people within our communities may have financial concerns, this does not excuse wasting police time and endangering the lives of others."

'Babby' Jesus is subject of service

THE 'babby' Jesus was taking centre stage as Tipton Civic Society held its special Black Country Christmas concert.

Nine readings and nine carols were being performed in the Black Country dialect in front of 200 people at a concert yesterday evening (Wednesday).

The civic society has been holding the event for over 22 years and in the past it has been televised and played live on radio.

Each year the concert is held in a different church and the concert always has a good turn out.

Guitar

As well as the concert and church service, musician Kenny Craig was also playing his guitar and getting the church singing along.

Chairman of the society, Ray Brothwood MBE, said: "The Black Country and its dialect needs to be kept alive and this is a great way for us to do it. We always have a really good turn out and the church is always full."

For those who may not be so familiar with the dialect, Mr Brothwood and the society offer lessons on the readings to enable more people can take part in the concert.

He added: "In the past we have even had people from Australia come and have a go at the lessons and it is always great fun."

School is now on the road to recovery, say inspectors

A SECONDARY school has been taken out of special measures — one year after its new headteacher vowed to drive up standards.

Dormston School, in Mill Bank, Sedgley, does still require improvement but Ofsted removed the school from special measures.

The education watchdog rated categories of leadership and the behaviour of pupils as 'good'.

Headteacher Ben Stitchman said he would take the school out of special measures on his appointment last September.

Buoyed by the latest Ofsted report, he is now targeting further improvement before inspectors return in two years.

He said: "We are pleased that the school has been removed from special measures. We recognise and feel the report is a fair reflection of improvements made over the past year and we will continue to work to become an outstanding as quickly as possible. Our next target is to make sure our exam results in the summer are what we expect from a good school."

"The key difference has been the change in expectations of children, who also want their school improved. Their attendance and behaviour has got better."

The report followed an inspection on November 18 and 19. It said Mr Stitchman had been 'highly effective' in re-shaping the school to

By Alex Ross

one with high expectations. It said the behaviour of students was good and they had responded well to the headteacher's appointment.

The inspectors said teaching had improved but was not consistently good. The progress of pupils was also still not good enough, according to the report, which put it down to a 'legacy of underachievement' now being addressed.

Mr Stitchman added: "We don't see this as a quick fix, this is the first step along the way to becoming a very good school."

Dudley North MP Ian Austin welcomed the Ofsted report. He said: "This is a huge step in the right direction."

"Mr Stitchman, his colleagues and the school governors have kept their promise to get the school out of special measures in a year and I am sure the school will continue to improve in the future."

Artist's vision of Very Light Rail HQ



An artist's impression of the Warwick Manufacturing Group's Very Light Rail hub in Dudley

FUTURISTIC designs of a £20 million scheme for Dudley which aims to change the face of rail travel nationwide has been unveiled.

The town will be home to a pioneering Very Light Rail (VLR) line as well as its research hub.

The innovative centre will be built at the closed Dudley railway station and the line will be opened to connect with heavy rail at Dudley Port.

The service linking passengers to the national rail network for the first time in 50 years will be used to pioneer the developing technology, which is based on the Stourbridge Shuttle, while also bringing more tourists to Dudley Zoo, the Black Country Living Museum and Dudley Canal Trust. It is hoped the line could be extended to Dudley town centre.

This is the first image released by architects showing what the National Centre for Development of Very Light Rail Technology in Dudley will look like. A testing platform sits at the heart of the three-storey building, while offices and a visitor area will be inside.

Bus firm's five per cent fare hike is condemned

BUS fare increases across the Black Country have been condemned by councillors.

National Express West Midlands announced last week that fares are set to increase by five per cent on January 2. For example, adult single tickets will rise from £2.10 to £2.20.

But Wolverhampton councillor Ian Claymore, who is also a member of transport body Centro, said the hike would be too costly for passengers.

"This will have a detrimental effect on the fare paying customers who use the National Express service," he said.

The bus company has said the new fares will support record investment into the region's bus network in 2015, including £34 million being spent on new buses.

Struggle

Councillor Claymore added: "I think you will find with the financial return that National Express present, they more than met their particular targets and I am sorry to see that they haven't taken that into consideration."

He said if buses were a person's only form of transport, they would have to struggle to come up with the extra cash for fares.

He concluded that the increase could also have another detrimental effect, if people turned to their own transport instead.

"It will lead to greater congestion on the roads, certainly during the rush hours," he said. "Instead of attracting people to using public transport it could have the opposite effect."

"That I think is also the tragedy of their decision to increase the fares, which

By Simon Stone

they have every right to do under the existing arrangements.

"I think they should have given consideration to the consequences of this particular decision," he added.

Walsall councillor Richard Worrall, who is also a Centro member, believes there is no need for a fare increase as the cost of fuel has gone down in recent weeks.

He said: "The question I would have for the bus company is, haven't fuel costs sunk by 20 per cent over recent months?"

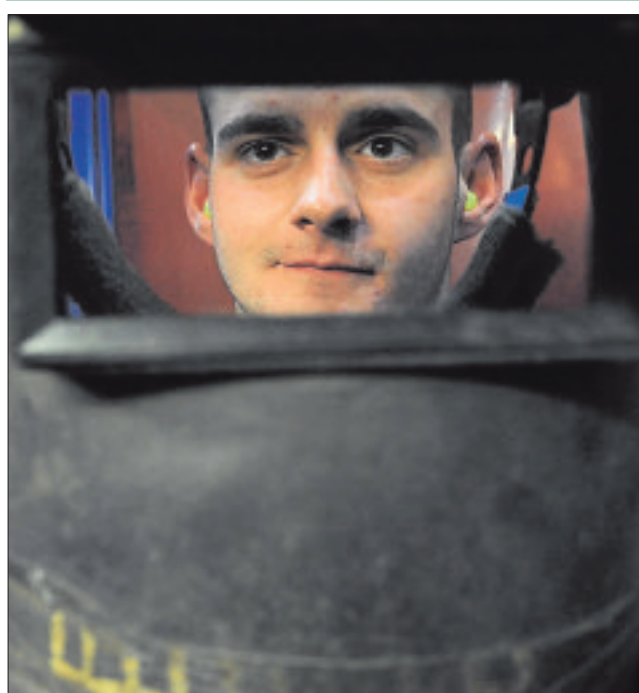
"So operating costs are falling because of the substantial drop in the cost of fuel — that is a matter of fact."

Fare increases were never good news, he said, and public transport in this country was already 'quite expensive' when compared with other countries.

"If people have to pay full fares, it is actually quite a lot of money. It is not very good news, not unexpected, but not very good news," he added.

National Express West Midlands spokesman Jack Kelly said student rates would not be affected.

Skilful Dean is the top trainee welder



Dean MacDonald, who showed his mettle as the country's most talented welder

AN APPRENTICE from the Black Country has been named the country's most talented trainee welder.

Dean MacDonald, who works at Doosan Babcock in Tipton, took the title after successfully completing four challenges.

The 20-year-old competed alongside nine other finalists from across the UK at The Skills Show at the NEC in Birmingham. He demonstrated his skills with carbon steel, stainless steel and aluminium using a combination of techniques.

Dean said he was delighted to have won the competition, adding: "Since getting my apprenticeship at Doosan Babcock, this is the best thing that has ever happened to me in my career."

"I'm really proud to have won the competition and I'm looking forward to doing more to help promote welding as a worthwhile job to other young people."

More than 100 trainee welders applied to take part in this year's Skill-Weld competition and Dean was shortlisted for the final stage of the competition after scoring highly in the regional heats earlier this year. Competitors from SkillWeld2014 could be selected to compete for their country at WorldSkills Abu Dhabi in 2017

Finance boss is new deputy leader

DUDLEY Council's new deputy leader has been elected as part of a re-shuffle following the resignation of its former leader. To concentrate on a national role.

Councillor Stuart Turner, also cabinet member for finance, has taken on the role of deputy to newly appointed council leader, Councillor Pete Lowe. The reorganisation took place after Councillor David Sparks decided to step down.

Councillor Sparks will remain in the council's cabinet, taking on the new role of combined authorities.

Councillor Stuart Turner, deputy leader of Dudley Council, said: "In my role as cabinet member for finance I know firsthand how difficult times are as we look to deliver services with hugely reduced budgets."

Injured woman is taken to hospital

AN elderly woman was taken to hospital with head injuries after she was struck by a car in Stourbridge.

The woman was taken to Dudley's Russells Hall Hospital following the incident that happened in Highpark Avenue in Wollaston shortly before 3pm on Monday.

The driver of the car, a Lexus, was left shaken but unhurt.

During the accident the vehicle also went through railing near to the Gate Hangs Well pub.

Police closed off Bridgnorth Road while the vehicle was recovered.

It's Blue Suede pews at mission

AN Elvis Presley impersonating clergyman from Worcestershire will be performing gospel songs at Overend Methodist Mission on Sunday from 6pm.

Rev Andy Kelso, who has appeared on TV, is currently touring in Austria but will be returning to sing at the church in Banner's Lane, Cradley.

Church worker Margaret Bradley said: "Andy wowed everyone when he came to perform his tribute act earlier in the year, so we thought that it would be good to invite him back to sing some of the Christmas songs that Elvis made famous. All are welcome to come along."

See www.overend-methodist.com for further information.

Schools' dinner money bid made

DUDLEY Council bosses have given the go-ahead for two schools to apply for £450,000 to bring kitchen and dining facilities up to scratch.

Netherton CofE Primary School and Lutley Primary School in Halesowen and are both looking to secure cash for the work because they are struggling to provide free school meals. Boss of children's services Councillor Tim Crompton has approved the bid, saying: "It is hoped that the entire bid will be successful."

Poet is appointed to judge contest

DUDLEY poet Liz Berry has been invited to judge a national competition.

There is a £500 first prize for the winner of the 2015 Interpreter's House Poetry Competition.

Liz, from Sedgley, won this year's Forward Prize for the best first collection for her selection of poems called Black Country.

Hundreds take on fun events to raise vital funds for charities



Striking a pose for the Mary Stevens Hospice Santa jog, Stourbridge



Two young girls complete with red nose at the Stourbridge event



A competitor warms up for the Mary Stevens Hospice Santa jog

Tis the season for Santas to get running boots on



Limbering up for the Acorns Hospice fun run



Heading for Acorns Santa Run at Walsall Arboretum



Natalie Farouz and Betty the dog at the arboretum

HUNDREDS of people braved the elements to enjoy some festive fun and raise money for a host of good causes.

Crowds of people donned their Father Christmas costumes to take part in annual Santa Runs in Walsall, Tettenhall and Stourbridge over the weekend. On Saturday, the festive run took place at Tettenhall College, then on Sunday there were runs held at Walsall Arboretum and Mary Stevens Park in Stourbridge. At Tettenhall, pupils, as well as family and friends, took part in the mile long run around the school grounds to raise money for Compton Hospice's Journey Appeal for bereaved families. Deb Liddle, librarian and charity organiser at the school, said: "It started off just a way for pupils to get



Youngsters are seen getting into the seasonal spirit at Tettenhall College Santa Dash



A crowd of people dress as Father Christmas to raise money for Acorns Children's Hospice

By Charlie Benton

involved with charity work and it has been going on for three years, getting bigger each year. "We have done some fundraising but we specifically wanted to do the Santa Run for the hospice because not many people know about it, especially the Journey Appeal, which does great work for bereaved families. The event was also attended by Vicki Wootton and Simon Cater from the Compton Hospice. Miss Wootton said: "We found out about a month ago that the school had chosen to do it for Compton Hospice. "The service helps so many families through bereavement so any money raised is fantastic." Mr Cater said: "The Santa Run has always been very successful and for Tettenhall College to support the hos-

pice is absolutely fantastic. We need to raise over £6 million a year just to keep the doors open, most of which is donated by the local community. "Events like this are great because it all adds up and goes towards the final pot. We are so appreciative." Councillor Andrew Wynne, who joined in with the race with his children, said: "I think it is a wonderful cause.

Gathered

"It will raise lots of money for the charity and the turnout was absolutely fantastic. It is particularly good fun for the kids, too." At Walsall, more than 250 people, young and old, gathered for the run, which raised cash for Acorns. The charity, which has a hospice in Walstead Road, Walsall, hopes to raise around £35,000 from the event. Shujee Khatun, major events officer at Acorns, said: "It



Two Father Christmases running and a-leaping



Now you see us - Santas appear from behind the trees



Four festive fundraisers at Tettenhall College

was a fantastic spectacle to see so many Santas in one place and wonderful to see so many friends and families having a brilliant time while raising money. "A big thank you to everyone who took part - the atmosphere was magical and it feels like Christmas has well and truly arrived. Shujee added: "Acorns relies on fundraising and donations for the majority of its income so events like the Santa Run have a real impact. It's not only a great way of having fun but it also helps us carry on our work." The event was supported by Western Power Distribution which means all monies raised will go directly towards funding the £8 million plus a year it costs to run the three Acorns hospices. Hundreds of people also turned out for the 5km run in Stourbridge, which raised money for Mary Stevens Hospice.

From Striking Santa and Angels who read all about it – the modern take on the festive story

FROM a disillusioned Father Christmas to a James Bond parody of saving a kidnapped Saint Nicholas and the birth of Jesus told from the perspective of a sheep – the traditional school nativity has evolved as the years have gone by.

And at least one Black Country school has dispensed with it altogether, although stressed it was still keeping the spirit of Christmas alive.

The only school that responded to an Express & Star survey and said it was not doing a nativity play was Ocker Hill Academy in Tipton.

The junior school's principal Adam Hollyhead said: "We don't do a play. The last few years we have hosted a Christmas carol concert at our local church, St Marks."

"We help raise funds for the church at the same time. We like to think we are keeping the true spirit of Christmas alive."

Some have brought in plays such as Santa's On Strike, by Andrew Oxspring. The play features a disheartened Father Christmas who thinks children no longer deserve presents. But then he gets shown pictures of family life to persuade him Christmas is still a time of giving. Schools that

By Dan Wainwright

are doing Santa's On Strike, including Brierley Hill Primary School and Cannock's Bridgton Primary School, are also having traditional nativities. Some schools leave the nativity to one year group and have others perform songs and plays that look at different aspects of Christmas.

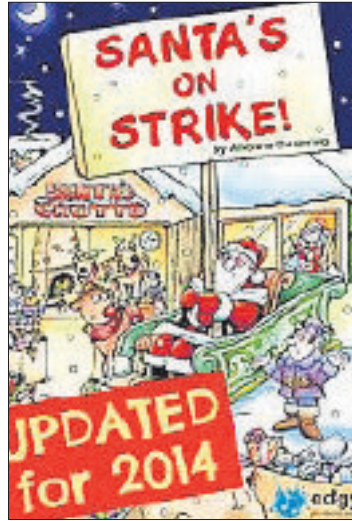
But in the vast majority of responses, the story of Jesus in the manger, the three wise men, shepherds watching flocks and a star above Bethlehem was there in some form.

The nativity also takes centre stage in schools in Dudley, although there are other plays performed as part of the concert.

Lee-Anne Knowles, assistant headteacher at Brierley Hill Primary School said: "We are performing three plays this Christmas. Nursery and reception are putting on 'Our First Nativity'."

Years one and two are doing one about Santa going on strike which is more modern. Years three to six are also doing a more modern one called 'Christmas is Forever' which is a parody of James Bond where Santa is stolen and they have to get him back."

Queen Victoria School in Sedgley did a modern nativity called Angel Express and a version of A Christmas Carol.



Santa's on Strike has an 'optional' nativity scene



Hey Ewe tells the story from a sheep's perspective



Angel Express is a modern nativity for infants

True meaning of Christmas still alive and well, despite claims made in survey

Traditional nativity play remains stable in schools

By Dan Wainwright

IS there really no room at the inn for a traditional nativity? That's the conclusion of users of a parenting website who believe just a third of schools still put on a Christmas play focussing on the birth of Jesus.

Political correctness in a multicultural society has been blamed. But an investigation by The Chronicle's sister publication The Express & Star found that, in the West Midlands at least, the true meaning of Christmas is alive and well in schools.

Dozens of primary schools in Wolverhampton, Dudley, Walsall, Sandwell and Staffordshire were contacted asking for details of their Christmas concerts.

And all but one that replied includes a traditional nativity as part of it – albeit some with a more modern take featuring a striking and disillusioned Father Christmas, angels learning of the birth of Christ from a newspaper and stories told from the perspective of a sheep.

Spaceman

According to Netmums, just a third of UK schools now put on the traditional nativity play.

The survey found, aliens, recycling bins, a Lord Sugar-style 'Lord Christmas', Elvis, footballers, a lobster, a napkin, carrots, sprouts, a pumpkin and a spaceman instead.

Around 47 per cent offer an 'updated nativity' and one in eight have dropped the Christmas references.

That is not the case in the Black Country and Staffordshire, although some schools tell different versions of the nativity, including one or two that do it from the perspective of the angels or even from the perspective of the sheep. Hey Ewe is one such play, being put on by Cannock's Chads Moor Community Infants and Nursery school.

According to the website Out Of The Ark, where the plays are sold, it is 'a straightforward but original nativity play told from the perspective of a curious sheep'.

Duncan Cocker, headteacher at Villiers Primary School in Bilston, was surprised by



Children at Villiers Primary, Bilston, in their nativity play. Head Duncan Cocker said he was surprised by the Netmums polls results

the survey results. He said: "I did wonder when I saw the figure about one third doing the nativity whether that meant it was only a nativity they put on with nothing else."

"Our reception Christmas production is entitled The Bossy Fairy. The story highlights the true spirit of Christmas and also works in the retelling of the nativity through our children's marvellous acting, singing and dancing skills. All 80 children were involved in this wonderful performance."

The nativity was very much the focus at SS Mary and John's Catholic Primary Academy in Wolverhampton. Principal Joanne Hanslip said: "We will be performing two nativity plays; one which is a modern nativity play

script telling the traditional nativity story; and our second which is the traditional nativity story accompanied by traditional and modern carols and interspersed with readings from the Bible."

Bilston's Wilkinson Primary School is involving all 427 children in performances in the new school hall, built following a devastating fire in 2011. Two groups of children will perform nativity stories while the older children are putting on Cinderella, family liaison officer Carol Duffield revealed.

Claregate Primary School is also doing nativity plays and carols. Headteacher Mick Murphy said: "The children at Claregate are performing Christmas songs for parents of

nursery children, an early years nativity, a Key Stage One nativity and the school choir perform a Christmas carol concert."

"We also have a visit from Santa and the parents and teachers association pay for a Christmas pantomime for years one to six and entertainment for nursery and reception children."

St Luke's Primary School in Blakenhall is doing a performance called Prickly Hay which is a musical based on the nativity. Children in years three to six are participating in an evening Christmas Concert where the children sing traditional carols and Christmas songs, read poems and readings from the bible which are all based on the na-

tivity. Russells Hall Primary School is doing traditional nativities.

And Anne Elledge from Emmanuel School, Walsall, said children had plenty of tradition in their plays too.

She said: "We are staging a Christmas play, involving all classes. It is based around the Russian traditional tale of Baboushka, who hosted the wise men on their journey to Bethlehem."

"They invited her to travel with them, but she had too much to do to clean her house, so said she would catch them up later. But she was too late, so still searches for the Christ-child, and when she sees a baby, leaves a toy, just in case."

"As part of the production we will do a traditional stable scene, there will be a snowflake dance, Russian folk dance, cleaning 'stomp,' and of course some songs."

"Quite separate from the play, we also take Christmas out into the community. The key stage two classes sing carols at Walsall Centre for the Blind, key stage one do a little performance for the Afro-Caribbean Community Association lunch club for elderly people, and the choir sing carols at a care home."

Topics

Netherton Primary School staged two traditional nativities – one in school and one at a church. But headteacher Andrew Rushton said there was another aspect to this year's Christmas concert. He said: "We are also holding a First World War concert, following this term's topics which have all been based on the Great War."

St James Primary School in Oldbury is putting on A Wriggly Nativity, which is designed for children to be able to move about while singing instead of sitting still.

Sacred Heart Primary in Tipton is putting on a nativity but also doing Aladdin as a Christmas pantomime.

None of the schools who responded to the E&S said they were removing the Christian references. But Netmums said its survey of 2,000 parents across the country had found cases where school Christmas plays incorporated references to the Muslim festival Eid, the Jewish Hanukkah or Hindu Diwali.

Siobhan Freegard co-founder of Netmums, said: "Do they know it's Christmas? At some schools, it seems not."

"While the UK is a diverse and multicultural society and it's right children learn about all religions and cultures, many parents feel the traditional nativity is being pushed aside."

Duty calls for all armchair marines

Idyllic park in such a beautiful county

GAMES

By Leon Burakowski

THE blockbuster Call of Duty franchise has been given a turbo-boost by the arrival of its latest incarnation, Call of Duty: Advanced Warfare (18).

This takes the all-conquering first person shooter video game 40 years into the future, the globe-trotting adventure beginning with a scenario of a North Korean invasion of its southern neighbour, with you among the US marines called in to even up the odds.

Where this scores over last year's slightly disappointing CoD: Ghosts is the amazing array of future weaponry, such as huge walking tanks and swarms of killer drones. This includes the ultimate accessory, an exo-skeleton giving your average grunt super-human strength and speed.

Developers Sledgehammer have learned from other newly popular arrivals, such as Titanfall, whilst the publisher Activision has the big bucks to attract A-list talent Kevin Spacey to add his voice and image to the project, as the world's most powerful private military contractor.

Call of Duty: Advanced Warfare has superb visuals and wisely blends the traditional first person shooter elements that made the game popular in the first place with enough futuristic bells and whistles to keep franchise fatigue at bay. Reviewed on X360 and available on all major platforms.

Based on Nickelodeon's sequel to **Avatar: The Last Airbender, The Legend Of Korra (12+)** is Activision's stylish beat-'em-up game featuring a feisty two-fisted heroine and her polar bear/dog Naga. The game, as reviewed on PS3, is good looking in the anime style thanks to Bayonetta mak-



Futuristic firefight — a scene from Call of Duty: Advanced Warfare

ers Japan's Platinum Games and true to the TV show. The repetitive waves of enemies can get tedious but there is usually a new challenge around the corner to keep the player engaged as you utilise Korra's control of the elements to progress. It's also available for PC, PS4, Xbox One and X360.

Let's get ready to Rumble... the wildly imaginative **Digimon All-Star Rumble (7)** sees the Digimon monsters pitted against each other in a series of gladiatorial bouts, available in different modes, with 12 of the creatures to choose from. The action is fast and furious, bizarre and colourful in the latest addition to Bandai Namco's Digimon universe. The game is available for PlayStation 3 and X360.

For Nintendo 3DS, **Tenkai Knights: Brave Battle (7)**, also from Bandai Namco, is another game based on an animated TV series/toy tie-in with robotic hi-tech machines facing off against each other. But it is just too generic, too run-of-the-mill to please any but the most undemanding fans of the TV show, and doesn't really make the most of the 3D facility.

Adventure Time is without doubt the funniest and most surreal work of animated TV genius since SpongeBob SquarePants. In fact, the story of Finn the Human and Jake his shape-shifting dog and their adventures in the Land of Ooo is possibly the oddest TV show ever and I warmly recommend a journey into the world of children's TV to check it out. I wish I could say the same for it's latest game spin-off **Adventure Time: The Secret of the Nameless Kingdom (7)**, available for X360, PS3, PC and here reviewed on 3DS. It's a slightly retro top-down view puzzle solver but never quite employs enough of the TV show's hip humour to overcome a fundamentally dull game. Also from Little Orbit comes **Penguins of Madagascar The Video Game (3)**, a tie-in with the new movie, which is available for 3DS, Wii and Wii U and is aimed at younger gamers. Swap between the penguins and solve puzzles in the pursuit of their much-loved cheese puffs. It's not too demanding but the familiar Penguin humour adds to the enjoyment.

TRAVEL

CORNWALL – such a long way but always worth it.

For me, when the weather is good, as it was for my family's visit, there is no better place to holiday.

After spending so long on the road, it is good to relax and get away from it all, and that is exactly what we were able to do at Trevella Holiday Park.

The award-winning Five-Star caravan and campsite is in Crantock, just three miles away from Newquay.

Major attractions like the famous Fistral beach, Minack Theatre, Lost Gardens of Heligan and the Eden Project are a short drive away, not forgetting the coastal resorts of St Ives, Padstow and Falmouth. We even took in Land's End.

Picnic

But when not travelling around to see the sights and sounds of the beautiful county, Trevella itself has such a lot to offer, creating that perfect family destination.

Our superior caravan, with decking to allow occupants to sit around and socialise, could accommodate up to eight people. It overlooked the popular playground, which also allowed for a kickaround or picnic.

There is a heated outdoor pool, a games room, with pool table and arcade machines and a crazy golf course. Visitors are also well-served for provisions with an on-site shop and cafe and two well-stocked fishing pools.

Trevella is in a secluded spot, which for me adds to its attraction as one can avoid the hustle and bustle of major holiday camps. Yet, there so much to see and do on the doorstep. Crantock beach is just a short walk away. And



The playground and green are features of the idyllic Trevella Park, Cornwall



The Safari tents have been set up for that extra adventure at the site

whatever one's preferred accommodation, Trevella has it covered, with two lodges also available for extra luxury.

Trevella has for 16 years in a row won a David Bellamy Gold Award and claimed a bronze award in Cornwall Tourism's Holiday Park of the Year awards 2014. General manager Kieran Lynch, said the park's setting and its 'Simple Pleasures' maxim were the main reasons behind its success.

Trevella welcomes touring caravans, motorhomes and campers. Pets

are also welcome. Holidays at Trevella Park start from just £561 in June for seven nights staying in a Luxury-grade static caravan with three bedrooms. Caravan and camping pitches start from only £18.80 per pitch per night.

In keeping with its aim to make a holidays a simple pleasure, the park has introduced safari tents and a guide to 50 Great Adventures. Find out more at www.trevella.co.uk or call 01637 830 308 to check availability.

Mark Shipp



A chance to recharge the batteries at the spa in Leicestershire



Attractive areas to sit and walk around



Beautiful views from the 25-metre pool



Enjoy the Three Rs at Champneys Spring

Pop open the Champneys and enjoy the feeling of total bliss

THE three 'Rs'. Rest, relaxation and recuperation. That's what Champneys is all about. A countryside escape to recharge the batteries with 'me time'.

This was my first visit to Champneys Springs in Leicestershire. I've been to day spas before but it never really feels all that relaxing because of time restrictions.

Enticing

So the chance of an overnight stay was particularly enticing. It was a good opportunity for some mother and daughter bonding time. The approach to the spa is down a very long driveway. How grand!

We found the spacious and luxurious reception area at the end of a pretty walkway over a pond complete with fountains and plenty of vibrant flowers. A beautiful entrance to start your stay along with cheerful, helpful and polite staff. After a brief tour of the facilities, dinner booked in and

TRAVEL FOCUS

By Lisa Williams

essential information given, we were ready to go.

There is loads on offer. Gym, workout classes, pool, steam room, sauna, spa treatments, bikes to ride around the grounds or just lounging around.

We wanted to start off with some energetic exercise so ventured to the well-equipped gym. After our brief session it was time to find our room and get ready to relax and enjoy a bit of pampering.

It felt peculiar at first, wandering around in a regulation robe and flip flops in the company of strangers. But it's what you do, so we did, and it's amazing how quickly it feels perfectly normal.

We ambled about taking in the different areas.

There are plenty of rooms and areas full of chairs, sofas, chaise longue for you to chill out. There's even a little snug with a

chess board, blankets and internet access if you really can't face being completely cut off from the world. We had no time for that though as our pre-booked thalassotherapy pool session beckoned. It's something neither of us had ever heard of but were intrigued to find out more.

The giant Jacuzzi-type pool is filled with mineral-enriched waters meant to aid well-being. Wading in was lovely – it was really warm and inviting.

Wellbeing

There are different areas within the huge pool all with hydrotherapy jets that stimulate and tone tired, aching muscles. Great for us as we both do a lot of running.

It's also good for treating cellulite, arthritis and muscular or joint aches and pains. It was heavenly. Be prepared; it's not gentle, there are no soft bubbles like a Jacuzzi but more intense jets.

We both left the pool with little red blotches on our bodies but feeling great and de-stressed. Keeping with the watery theme it was time to try out the beautiful pool next

door. All this doing very little is tiring so it was great having a room as a base. Our haven was simply decorated with two comfy and sumptuous armchairs.

We could shower, watch a bit of TV, read magazines and chatter away while we decided how we would relax next.

For me it was the bamboo massage. I had visions of large canes being inflicted on me. Treat or torture? Turns out it was a bit of both. It's not for the faint-hearted. There's no gentle, tickly massage.

The therapist oiled up some thick bamboo canes rolling them over my legs, arms and back to stretch and massage my body. The pressure was quite intense but I quite liked it and came out feeling relaxed with silky smooth skin.

Ravenous from all our activities dinner was a welcome prospect. The menu is carefully put together and indicates, fibre, fat, wheat-free, dairy-free, vegetarian, options. The rooms all have DVD players so a film and bed was the perfect end to our day.

For more details visit www.champneys.com/spa-resorts/champneys-spring

One-way door policy as pub now open until 3am

Home has major appeal



A cool £2.5 million price tag – The Ridgeway is the most expensive residential property on the market in the city

STANDING in more than 11 acres in Lower Penn, it is one of Wolverhampton's most expensive homes – and said to be the finest example of the work of an eccentric army major-turned-architect.

Springhill Lane house The Ridgeway, built by architect Major Kenneth Hutchinson Smith, has an asking price of £2.5m and is the most expensive residential property on the market in Wolverhampton.

Major Smith built several properties in a similar style throughout the West Midlands during the 1920s and 1930s, inspired by his own personal vision of what the perfect

home should look like. The Tudor-style house includes seven bedrooms, a reception and dining hall, and a cinema room and gardens.

The Ridgeway also includes heringbone brickwork, stone fireplaces and special features, being partly based on the 15th Century Wealden Houses of the southern counties.

Believing homes should be built 'the old-fashioned way', Major Smith worked with bricklayers who used reclaimed bricks and lime mortar, wood carvers, and carpenters who worked without modern tools to create his homes.

A WOLVERHAMPTON city centre pub has been granted an extension to its licensing hours.

The Royal London, Wulfruna Street says it will operate a one-way door policy for the extra hour it can remain open. The pub applied for a variation to its existing licence so it could stay open until 3am, seven days a week.

Its previous licence was for 9am to 1am Monday to Wednesday, as well as Sunday, and from 9am to 2am Thursday to Saturday.

As the pub falls within the city's Cumulative Impact Zone which means the applicants, Stonegate Pub Company, had to convince the city council's licensing sub-committee the changes would not add to crime and public nuisance.

At a hearing on December 3 solicitor Clare Eames, representing Stonegate, argued that by allowing the pub to stay open later, and stopping entry to new patrons at 2am, they would be preventing potential nuisance behaviour as there would only be one 'dispersal'.

Positive

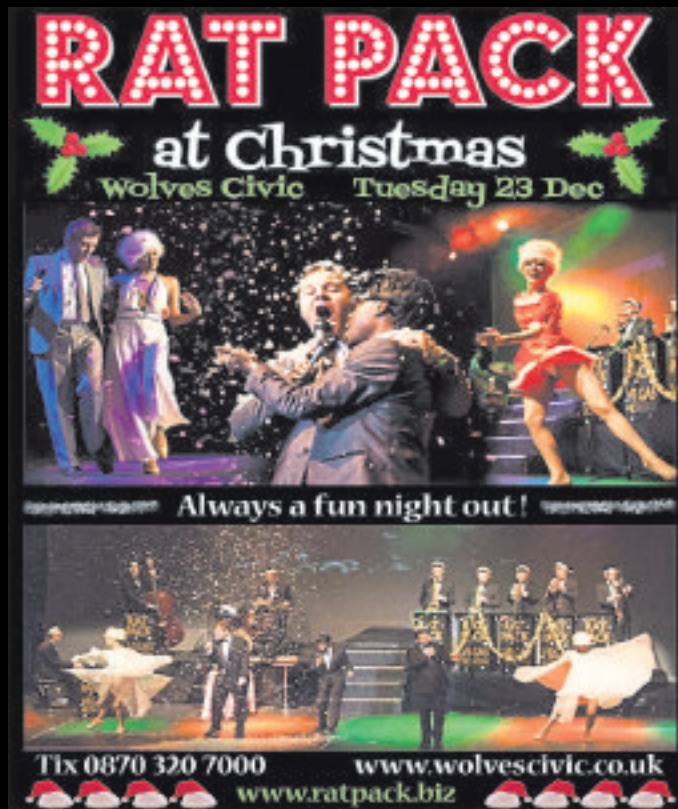
With an earlier closing time, patrons leave the pub and continue on to other pubs, resulting in two dispersals during the night.

She said manager Donna Boden, who is the chairman of Pubwatch and on the board of directors for the City Centre BID, runs the premises 'very strictly and very robustly' and had had a very positive impact on crime and disorder in the area and on how the pub operates.

Councillor Ian Claymore asked what the pub's policy was concerning anti-social behaviour and how it dealt with customers who were drunk or on drugs.

Ms Boden said she had a very strict ID policy, door staff four nights a week, and intoxicated people were asked to leave.

Sub-committee chair Councillor Bishan Dass said it had been easy for the committee to make its mind up.



THE RAT PACK AT CHRISTMAS AT WULFRUN HALL, WOLVERHAMPTON - TUESDAY, 23RD DECEMBER 1914

It's fun all the way as the "Purveyors of Cool" come to Wulfrun Hall in Wolverhampton on Tuesday, 23rd December with a sensational show featuring The Greatest Music of the 20th Century. Wonderful memories of the three wise men Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin and Sammy Davis Jr. In a fabulous production, now in their 12th year that continues to be successful all over the world. Their all action show is totally live both musically and vocally with every song an absolute classic - Come Fly with me, Under my Skin, Mr Bojangles, Fly me to the Moon, That's Amore, Mack the Knife, Sway and many more of Santa's Festive Yuletide favourites.

Musicians from their fantastic orchestra also join in the fun on stage, along with The Fabulous Vegas Showgirls who add a touch of glamour to proceedings.

With an abundance of class and style they take you on a trip back in time to vintage 60's Las Vegas style at the coolest Christmas Party of the year.

Tickets for the 7.30pm show are available from the Box Office at www.wolvescivic.co.uk or 01902 550 671 or www.ratpack.biz

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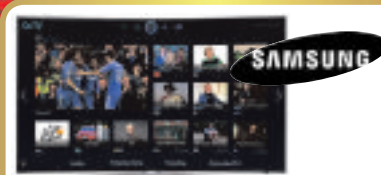
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Chuckle time at next year's panto

THIS year's Grand pantomime has only just took to the boards but already next year's festive stars have been revealed.

The Chuckle Brothers will star in 2015 festive season's Grand Theatre pantomime, returning to the theatre for their first Wolverhampton panto in 22 years. They will star in Peter Pan, which kicks off a six-week run on December 12 next year.

This year's panto — Cinderella — had raked in £1 million before the show opened on Saturday.

The last panto appearance by the Chuckle Brothers at the Grand was Snow White and the Seven Dwarves with Linda Lusardi. Tickets for next year's panto go on sale today (Thursday).

Festive matinees at Symphony Hall

CHRISTMAS week will see afternoon festive concerts being held at Birmingham Symphony Hall.

On Monday, December 22, Jonathan Cohen hosts a Christmas Carol Sing-along from 2.30 featuring special guest Alison Jear, the London Concert Chorus and London Concert Orchestra. On Christmas Eve, from 2.30, the London Concert Orchestra are joined by Birmingham Choral Union and Staffordshire Children's Choir, plus guest tenor Ed Lyon, for The Glory of Christmas with music from Rutter, Handel, Schubert and Bach. See www.thsh.co.uk or call 0121 345 0603.

Seann to be wild with comic as long as he goes to right city

Cinders already a success

PANTO season is with us once again and this year at Wolverhampton's Grand Theatre it's Cinderella, which is set to beat box office records.

The show stars camp comic Julian Clary, Holly-oaks' Joe Tracini, former X Factor finalist Niki Evans and 19-year-old debutant Alice Baker as Cinders.

As he prepared for his role as Dandini, Clary explained his love of panto: "It is a true art form, something that is very different from anything else I do but at the same time it is one of the most enjoyable. For it to work the cast has to really feed off each other and bring the audience into play. You always get so many unexpected things happening in the panto world."

Grand Theatre chief executive Peter Cutchie said audiences could expect to see "a truly spectacular family pantomime". It runs until January 18.



Stars of the Grand panto Julian Clary, Alice Baker as Cinderella and Joe Tracini

IT'S all happening for comedian Seann Walsh at the minute.

The floppy-haired funnyman is on tour with a date to come in Wolverhampton. His debut DVD Seann To Be Wild has been released and two more series of the comedy panel show Virtually Famous — on which he is a captain — have been recommissioned.

All this on top of a sell-out run at the Edinburgh fringe. He really is living the dream.

"Stand-up was what I always wanted to do, since watching the likes of Whose Line Is It Anyway? as kid," said Walsh. It has earned him a Leicester Mercury Comedian of the Year Award, a Chortle Best Breakthrough Act nominee and an award as Best Comere.

Wulfrun

With support from Mark Simmons, the comic says he is enjoying the tour so far, entitled Seann Walsh:28, ahead of a date at Wolverhampton's Wulfrun Hall on Thursday, December 18.

He promises this time he will turn up — and at the right venue, too. Recently Walsh was forced to call off a show, and apologise, when he arrived in Hereford instead of Hertford.

And, the last time in Wolverhampton, he says he was too ill to perform, though soldiered on regardless.

"I had to sit down the whole time, I shouldn't re-



Comedian Seann Walsh

ally have been there," he said. "So if anyone saw that gig, it wasn't really me."

Offstage, Walsh is trying to add to his acting credits. He appeared in The Bill in 2007 and in the sit-com Big Bad World.

He writes, alongside his friend Henry Packer, but is happy enough to make a living from making people laugh, particularly as, in his words: "I don't really work too hard".

Tickets for the Wulfrun Hall gig, which starts at 8pm, are available on 0870 3207000 or at www.wolvescivic.co.uk website.

Slade party night among top gigs

THE Fab(ricated) Four come to Wolverhampton tomorrow night (Friday) when the Bootleg Beatles play the Civic Hall.

On the same night, next door at the Wulfrun, Chrisie Hynde of The Pretenders is in concert, after this year proving she's still a force to be reckoned with on acclaimed solo album Stockholm.

Expect a raucous night with Buster Bloodvessel and co when Bad Manners play the Robin 2 in Bilston tonight (Thursday). Guitar legend Michael Schenker plays the Robin 2 on Tuesday and then former Wyre Forest rock 'n' roller Mike Sanchez brings his Portions to Bilston on Wednesday. Then next Thursday Dave Hill and Don Powell's Slade have a Xmas party.

Comedy central at the Civic halls

THERE'S festive fun in store with a feast of comedy in the run up to Christmas. Wolverhampton is comedy central, starting tonight (Thursday) when Omid Djalili brings his Iranalamadingdong to the Civic Hall. He is at the Symphony Hall tomorrow.

Jimmy Carr's Funny Business tour is at the Civic on Saturday and comedy veteran Ken Dodd performs Sunday. Lee Mack has sold out Tuesday and Wednesday nights at the Civic. Seann Walsh is at the Wulfrun next Thursday (see main article) and Roy Chubby Brown will be rude and crude at the Civic next Friday. Call 0870 320 7000.

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CHOICE



Simon Cowell

The X Factor (TV, 8.30pm)

This is it then – the first stage of the 2014 sing-off when we see who has the right stuff to walk away with the prize money. Not that winning the show matters that much of course; even getting through to this stage of the game can be such a massive boost to any aspiring TV presenter or reality star looking for a spot in the Big Brother house; next year's I'm A Celebrity... or even, dare we say it, a pop career of their own. As the judges repeatedly reminded us the other week, "Literally anything can happen". So, as the remaining acts battle it out in part one of the final, settle back and enjoy as the lucky few attempt to hold their nerve and sing for their lives. Your host is Dermot O'Leary, while Simon Cowell, Cheryl, Mel B and Louis Walsh will be passing judgement.

BBC1

6.00 Breakfast. 10.00 Saturday Kitchen Live. 11.30 James Martin: Home Comforts. 12.00 BBC News: Weather. 12.10 Football Focus. 12.50 Saturday Sportsday. 1.00 Gymnastics World Cup. 3.00 Cycling: Track World Cup. 4.30 Final Score. 5.10 A Question of Sport. (R) 5.40 BBC News: Regional News: Weather.

6.00 Pointless Celebrities. Alexander Armstrong quizzes eight chart-topping singers – Paul Young and Carol Decker, Sheila Ferguson and Dana, Paul Heaton and Jacqui Abbott and Keith Duffy and Mikey Graham.

6.50 Strictly Come Dancing. Tess Daly and Claudia Winkelman present the semi-final of the ballroom battle, in which the remaining five couples will be hoping to pull off their best performances yet as they tackle two dances each. Judges Len Goodman, Bruno Tonioli, Craig Revel Horwood and Darcey Bussell give their verdicts on the routines, but the all-important votes from the viewers decide who will waltz into next week's final and compete for the glitterball trophy. The results are tomorrow at 7.00pm.

8.25 Atlantis. As the gang is chased round an ancient burial ground by an army of undead flesh-eaters, and Jason battles for his life within the caves.

9.10 Casually. A ceiling collapse at the cathedral leaves several of the congregation trapped. Lolly helps a patient who thinks he is Jesus and Zoe catches Max spying on her and Dylan.

10.00 The National Lottery Live. Jenni Falconer is joined by supergroup McBusted as she reveals the numbers for the Lotto and Thunderball draws.

10.10 BBC News: Weather. 10.30 **Match of the Day.** Dan Walker presents highlights of the latest Premier League clashes, including Chelsea v Hull City at Stamford Bridge and Arsenal v Newcastle United at the Emirates Stadium; National Lottery Update.

11.55 The Football League Show. Manish Bhasin presents highlights and all the goals from the latest fixtures in the Championship, League One and League Two.

1.15 Film: Black Eagle. (1989) 2.50 Weather for the Week Ahead. 2.55 BBC News.

BBC2

6.00 CBBC. 11.00 The Blue Planet. (R) 12.00 James Martin's Food Map of Britain. (R) 12.20 Rick Stein's Far Eastern Odyssey. (R) 1.20 The Rockford Files. (R) 2.05 Film: Funny Girl. (1968) Musical biopic of Fanny Brice, starring Barbra Streisand. 4.30 Andrew Marr's The Making of Modern Britain. (R) 5.30 Restoring England's Heritage.

6.00 Secrets of the Castle with Ruth, Peter and Tom. Ruth Goodman, Peter Ginn and Tom Pinfold examine the ways in which every aspect of the construction of a castle required the stonemasons, blacksmiths and carpenters to co-ordinate their efforts – from making and sharpening tools, to processing wood, and securing timber scaffolding on the castle walls. Peter and Tom help fix the Guedelon water mill, which is having major teething problems, and the team follows the progress of the construction of a wooden walkway connecting the chapel tower with the Great Hall. (R)

7.00 Flog It! Adam Partridge and Catherine Southon value items brought into the town hall in Todmorden, West Yorkshire, while Paul Martin visits the Brompton People Museum in Haworth.

8.00 Perry and Croft: Made in Britain. The concluding episode of the celebration of writing duo David Croft and Jimmy Perry, examines how the duo's comedies each encapsulated the end of an era. Last in the series.

8.30 Dad's Army. Jonesy's van runs out of petrol and the platoon is forced to spend the night in a spooky deserted house, where the men's imaginations soon run wild. (R)

9.00 QI XL. Extended edition. Sara Pascoe, Jack Whitehall, Adam Hills and Alan Davies attempt to answer host Stephen Fry's range of fiendish questions.

9.45 Tomorrow's Worlds: The Unearthly History of Science Fiction. Dominic Sandbrook examines the use of time travel in the genre, from The Time Machine to Doctor Who. With David Tennant, Christopher Lloyd and Scott Bakula. Last in the series.

10.45 Film: Let Me In. (2010) Horror remake, starring Chloe Grace Moretz and Kodi Smit-McPhee. Comedy, starring Dan Fogler.

12.35 Film: Forbidden Planet. (1956) 2.10 This is BBC Two.

ITV

6.00 CITV: The Aquabats! Super Show! 6.25 Pat & Stan. (R) 6.35 Pat & Stan. (R) 6.40 Dino Dan: Trek's Adventures. (R) 7.05 Canimals. (R) 7.10 Signed Stories: Share a Story. (R) 7.15 Sooty. (R) 7.25 Mr Bean: The Animated Series. (R) 7.40 Text Santa: Little Helpers. (R) 7.45 Hulk and the Agents of Smosh. 8.10 Text Santa: Little Helpers. (R) 8.15 Horrid Henry. 8.30 The Munch Box. 9.25 Dinner Date. (R) 10.20 Murder: She Wrote. (R) 11.15 ITV News: Weather.

11.20 Storage Hoarders. (R) 12.20 Film: Columbo: Fade in to Murder. (1976) Crime drama, starring Peter Falk. 1.55 Film: Mannequin. (1987) Fantasy comedy, starring Andrew McCarthy. 3.50 Film: Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban. (2004) Fantasy adventure, starring Daniel Radcliffe.

6.30 Regional Programme: Weather. 6.40 ITV News: Weather.

6.55 New You've Been Framed! 7.25 The Chase: Christmas Special. Bradley Walsh hosts a festive edition with actors Steve Pemberton and Ben Miller.

8.30 The X Factor. They vowed the judges at the double auditions, survived the six-chair challenge and made it through nine weeks of live studio rounds. Now, the three remaining acts head to Wembley Arena to battle it out in the first part of the final. Viewers can also expect performances by some of the biggest names in the charts across the two shows, including Madonna if rumours are to be believed. At the end of the programme, Dermot O'Leary announces the results of the public vote and the contestant in third place is eliminated. Concludes tomorrow at 8pm.

10.35 The Jonathan Ross Show. With former X Factor judge Tulisa Contostavlos, actor and comedian James Corden, Mad Men star Jon Hamm, Celebrity Juice host Keith Lemon and music by singer-songwriter Paloma Faith.

11.40 ITV News: Weather. 11.55 Film: Balls of Fury. (2007) The FBI recruits a washed-up former ping-pong champion to infiltrate an underground tournament run by a criminal mastermind. Comedy, starring Dan Fogler.

1.30 Jackpot247. 3.00 The Jeremy Kyle Show USA. (R) 3.40 ITV Nightscreen.

CHANNEL 4

6.10 NFL: Rush Zone. 6.35 Trans World Sport. 7.30 Survival of the Fittest. 7.55 The Morning Line. 9.00 Weekend Kitchen. 10.00 Frasier. (R) 10.30 Frasier. (R) 11.00 The Big Bang Theory. (R) 11.30 The Simpsons. (R) 12.00 The Simpsons. (R) 12.30 Marvel's Agents of SHIELD. (R) 1.30 Channel 4 Racing. Live coverage from Cheltenham and Doncaster. 3.55 Come Dine with Me. (R) 4.25 Come Dine with Me. (R) 4.55 Come Dine with Me. (R) 5.25 Come Dine with Me. (R) 5.55 Channel 4 News.

6.00 100 Greatest Toys with Jonathan Ross. A countdown of the nation's favourite games, gadgets and playthings, as decided by a Channel 4 online poll. Inventors and toy-makers tell the inside stories of their creations and successes – including Action Man, Yahtzee, Barbie and Trivial Pursuit – while the children of yesteryear, namely today's celebrities, authors, actors and journalists, take a nostalgic look back at the toys they loved. Also revealed is the inspiration behind the design of the Raleigh Chopper, the unlikely individual responsible for the creation of one of the world's toughest action figures, and why the Vietnam War almost brought Britain's Matchbox car range to an end. (R)

9.00 Film: Hope Springs. (2012) Premiere. A middle-aged married woman feels her long-standing relationship with her unadventurous husband is becoming stale. When she hears of a marriage counsellor offering therapy sessions in his remote retreat, she persuades her reluctant spouse to join her for a week with the doctor rediscovering why they fell in love in the first place. Romantic comedy, with Meryl Streep, Tommy Lee Jones and Steve Carell.

11.00 Film: An Officer and a Gentleman. (1982) A Navy recruit has an uneasy romance with a factory worker and is pushed to his limits by a tough sergeant. Romantic drama, starring Richard Gere, Debra Winger and Louis Gossett Jr.

1.20 Film: Q&A. (1990) Thriller, with Nick Nolte, Timothy Hutton and Armand Assante. 3.55 Hollyoaks. Omnibus. Ste returns to the village. (R) 5.45 NFL: Rush Zone. Animation about a young American football fan.

CHANNEL 5

6.00 Milkshake! 9.45 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. (R) 10.20 Access. 10.30 World Strongman Championship. (R) 11.25 Film: Ice Age: The Meltdown. (2006) 1.10 Film: The Christmas Bunny. (2019) Premiere. Family drama, starring Sophie Bolen. 2.55 Film: Angels and Ornaments. (2014) Premiere. Romantic fantasy, starring Jessalyn Gilsig. 4.40 Film: Mrs Miracle 2: Miracle in Manhattan. (2010) Family drama sequel, starring Doris Roberts.

6.30 Film: Mistletoe Over Manhattan. (2011) Santa Claus's wife goes to New York to perform a Christmas miracle and give her husband fresh inspiration. She befriends a cop who is in the middle of a divorce and offers to become a nanny to his children. She then discovers he still loves his wife, and tries to find a way to bring them back together. Seasonal fantasy, starring Tricia Helfer and Greg Bryk.

8.15 My Crazy Christmas Obsession. Documentary following four American households who take festive decorations to the extreme, spending huge amounts of money, time and energy on their properties to bring Christmas cheer to their neighbourhoods. In Oklahoma, Shay has 168 trees of all shapes and sizes in her home, festooned with more than 50,000 ornaments and 100,000 fairy lights. (R)

9.05 5 News Weekend. 9.10 **TV's 50 Greatest Magic Tricks.** TV illusionists have been saving ladies in half, catching bullets between their teeth, reading minds and performing feats of escapology for decades. Channel 5 counts down the best, including the astonishing set-pieces of Penn and Teller, the mind-bending of Derren Brown and the street magic of David Blaine. It features spectacular illusions, such as making the Statue of Liberty disappear, intimate card tricks and the lighter side of the business, thanks to the inclusion of comedy great Tommy Cooper. Paul Daniels and Dynamo also appear in this magic compendium, with contributions from Joe Pasquale, Dick and Dom, and Stephen Mulhern. (R)

12.05 SuperCasino. 3.10 Gotham. (R) 4.00 House of Cards. (R) 4.25 Make It Big. (R) 5.15 Angels of Jarm. (R) 5.40 Roary the Racing Car. (R)

DIGITAL

BBC Three 7.00 Doctor Who 8.00 Top Gear 9.10 Sherlock 10.40 Live at the Apollo 11.10 Family Guy 12.55 American Dad! 1.20 Some Girls 1.45 Sweat the Small Stuff 2.15 Live at the Apollo 2.45 In Deep 3.00 How Safe Are My Drugs? 4.00 Close

BBC Four 7.00 Ice Age Giants 8.00 Sex and Sensibility: The Allure of Art Nouveau 9.00 Inspector Montalbano 10.50 The Richest Songs in the World 12.20 Sounds of the Sixties 1.20 Top of the Pops: 1979 1.55 Ice Age Giants 2.55 Sex and Sensibility: The Allure of Art Nouveau 3.55 Close

ITV2 11.20 The Cube: Celebrity Special 12.20 You've Been Framed! 12.50 Film: Twins (1988) 3.00 Film: Secret Santa (2003) 4.50 You've Been Framed at Christmas! 7.00 Film: Pearl Harbor (2001) 10.35 The X Factor 11.35 Celebrity Juice: Christmas Special 12.35 The X Factor 2.35 Nicole Scherzinger: The Hot Desk 2.45 Teleshopping 5.45 ITV2 Nightscreen

ITV3 1.00 A Touch of Frost 3.00 Agatha Christie's Marple 7.00 Rosemary & Thyme 8.00 Doc Martin 9.00 Foyle's War 11.00 A Touch of Frost 1.00 Bomb Girls 1.50 Movies Now 2.00 ITV3 Nightscreen 2.30 Teleshopping

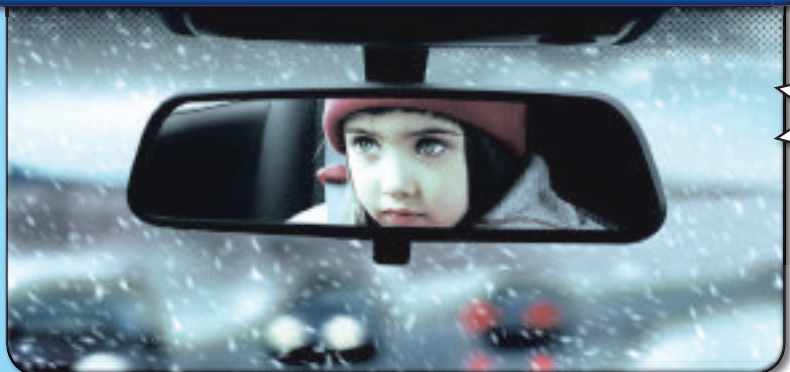
ITV4 11.25 Alias Smith and Jones 12.30 Film: Paths of Glory (1957) 2.00 Film: Captain Newman MD (1964) 5.00 Live FIA Formula E Championship. The Punta del Este ePrix. 7.30 Film: Licor to Kill (1989) 10.15 Film: Scarface (1983) 1.35 Alias Smith and Jones 2.40 Movies Now 2.50 ITV4 Nightscreen 3.00 Teleshopping

E4 11.00 Melissa & Joey 1.00 Film: First Daughter (2004) 3.15 Rude (ish) Tube Shorts 3.30 Made in Chelsea 4.35 Melissa & Joey 5.30 How I Met Your Mother 6.30 The Big Bang Theory 9.00 Film: The Mechanic (2011) 11.50 Rude Tube 11.55 The Inbetweeners 1.05 The Cleveland Show 3.15 Rules of Engagement 4.00 Happy Endings 4.45 The 100

ITV4 11.00 Hills of Home (1948) 1.00 Runaway Bride (1999) 3.20 Silent Running (1972) 5.10 Big (1988) 7.15 Post Grad (2009) 9.00 Safe House (2012) 11.15 Ghost Rider: Spirit of Vengeance (2011) 1.05 Working Girl (1988) 3.25 Close

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CHOICE



Gary Lineker

Sports Personality of the Year 2014 (BBC1, 8pm)
If English football supporters can put aside for a second their disappointment over the failure of Roy Hodgson's men to make their mark in Brazil during the summer, it's been another remarkable year for British sport. Rory McIlroy won two of golf's major tournaments, Lizzy Yarnold secured gold at the Winter Olympics and Glasgow hosted the Commonwealth Games, at which Jo Pavey won a bronze medal in the 5,000m before being crowned the 10,000m champion at the European Championships. Cameras return to Glasgow for the Sports Personality of the Year event. Any of those could lift the trophy, but the smart money is probably on Lewis Hamilton following his second Formula One championship title.

BBC1

6.00 Breakfast. **7.35** Match of the Day. (R) **9.00** The Andrew Marr Show. **10.00** Fern Britton Meets Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson. **11.00** Sunday Politics. **12.15** MOTD2 Extra. With Mark Chapman and the Match of the Day team. **1.00** BBC News: Weather. **1.15** Bargain Hunt. **2.15** Homes Under the Hammer. (R) **3.15** Escape to the Country. (R) **4.15** Lifeline. **4.25** Songs of Praise. **5.00** Pointless Celebrities. (R) **5.50** BBC News: Regional News: Weather. **6.20** **Countryside.** The team is in the Chwydian range in north Wales, where Ellie Harrison meets schoolchildren running their own chicken farm and Matt Baker joins a conservation team in the uplands. Including Weather for the Week Ahead. **7.20** **Strictly Come Dancing: The Results.** Tess Daly and Claudia Winkleman present as five become four, determining the line-up for next week's final, and there is a performance by Paloma Faith. **8.00** **Sports Personality of the Year 2014.** Gary Lineker, Gabby Logan and Clare Balding present this year's ceremony live from the Hydro Arena in Glasgow, where the successor to Andy Murray will be crowned. The contenders for the main prize include Rory McIlroy, who dominated the golfing scene and won two of the year's four Majors, Lewis Hamilton, whose victories on the way to title glory saw him surpass Nigel Mansell as the British driver to have won the most Formula 1 races, and Winter Olympic champion Lizzy Yarnold, who claimed gold in the skeleton. The other nominees are Gareth Bale, Max Whitlock, Adam Peaty, Carl Froch, Charlotte Dujardin, Jo Pavey, plus Paralympic skier Kelly Gallagher and guide Charlotte Evans. Subsequent programmes subject to change. **10.20** **BBC News:** Regional News: Weather. **10.45** **Match of the Day 2.** Mark Chapman reviews the latest Premier League action, including Manchester United v Liverpool and Swansea City v Tottenham Hotspur. **11.45** **The Apprentice.** (R) **12.45** **Film:** It's a Wonderful Afterlife. (2010) **2.20** Weather for the Week Ahead. **2.25** BBC News.

BBC2

6.00 Animal Park. (R) **6.30** Match of the Day at 50. (R) **7.35** Life in a Cottage Garden with Carol Klein. (R) **8.05** Countryfile. (R) **9.00** The Football League Show. (R) **10.20** Saturday Kitchen Best Bites. **11.50** Rick Stein's Christmas Special. (R) **12.50** James Martin's Food Map of Britain. (R) **1.00** The Rockford Files. (R) **1.50** **Film:** Funny Lady. (1975) Musical comedy sequel, starring Barbra Streisand. **4.05** **Film:** Emma. (1996) Jane Austen drama, starring Gwyneth Paltrow. **6.00** **Sports Personality of the Year at 60.** Gary Lineker presents a look at the history of the ceremony, which has become a sports and broadcasting institution since first being held in 1954. Former winners including Steve Redgrave, Princess Anne and Sebastian Coe recall their memories of the show, Des Lynam discusses his years presenting the awards and Sue Barker is among the contributors remembering the special awards given to the likes of Muhammad Ali and Bobby Robson. (R) **7.00** **James May's Toy Stories: Flight Club.** The Top Gear presenter investigates the enduring appeal of the model aeroplane and sets out to break the British record for the longest flight by a toy glider. (R) **8.00** **Film: What Women Want.** (2000) A freak accident gives a womanising executive the ability to hear the thoughts of the opposite sex. Embittered after losing out on promotion to a female colleague, he uses his new-found talent to exact revenge – but the insight it provides ultimately brings out an unexpected sensitive side. Romantic comedy, starring Mel Gibson, Helen Hunt, with Marisa Tomei, Alan Alda and Bette Midler. **10.00** **Russell Howard's Good News.** The comedian offers his perspective on stories dominating the media. (R) **10.30** **Film: Mrs Henderson Presents.** (2005) A widow invests her fortune in an abandoned London theatre and defies censorship laws to stage a controversial nude revue. Fact-based comedy drama, with Judi Dench and Bob Hoskins. **12.10** **Film:** A Walk to Remember. (2002) **1.45** Sign Zone: Countryside. (R) **2.45** Holby City. (R) **3.45** This Is BBC Two.

ITV

6.00 CITV: The Aquabats! Super Show! **6.25** Pat & Stan. (R) **6.35** Pat & Stan. (R) **6.40** Dino Dan: Trek's Adventures. (R) **6.50** Dino Dan: Trek's Adventures. (R) **7.05** Canimals. (R) **7.10** Signed Stories: Share a Story. (R) **7.15** Sooty. (R) **7.25** Mr Bean: The Animated Series. (R) **7.40** Text Santa: Little Helpers. (R) **7.45** Ultimate Spider-Man. **8.10** Text Santa: Little Helpers. (R) **8.15** Horrid Henry. **8.30** Big Time Rush. **9.00** The Aquabats! Super Show! (R) **9.25** ITV News. **9.30** Dickinson's Real Deal. (R) **10.25** Murder, She Wrote. (R) **11.25** ITV News: Weather. **11.30** **Film:** Problem Child. (1990) Comedy, starring John Ritter. **1.05** Tipping Point. (R) **2.05** You've Been Framed! (R) **2.35** The X Factor. (R) **4.40** **Film:** Death Becomes Her. (1992) Black comedy fantasy, starring Goldie Hawn and Meryl Streep. **6.35** **Regional Programme:** Weather. **7.00** **Catchphrase Christmas Special.** Former glamour model Katie Price, actor-presenter Warwick Davis and panto king Christopher Biggins line up to "see it and say it" as they try to guess the familiar phrases hidden in festive-themed animated clues and win thousands of pounds for their chosen charities. Stephen Mulhern hosts. **8.00** **The X Factor Results.** With part one of the final behind them, this is the last chance for the two remaining acts to impress the public in the race to become this year's X Factor winner. The judges offer their comments as usual, but the result is entirely in viewers' hands, and at the end of the programme, Dermot O'Leary reveals which of these aspiring pop stars will walk away with the prize of a record deal. There are also performances by more world-famous acts, sending the show out on a high. Last in the series. **10.05** **Film: The Holiday.** (2006) Two single women from opposite sides of the Atlantic find love after they swap houses over Christmas. Romantic comedy, with Cameron Diaz and Kate Winslet, Jack Black and Jude Law. Continues after the News. **11.05** **ITV News:** Weather. **11.20** **Film: The Holiday.** (2006) Concluded. **12.45** The Store. Home shopping. **3.20** Motorsport UK. **3.20** The Jeremy Kyle Show USA. (R) **4.05** ITV Nightscreen. **5.05** The Jeremy Kyle Show. (R)

CHANNEL 4

6.10 NFL: The American Football Show. (R) **7.10** How I Met Your Mother. (R) **7.35** How I Met Your Mother. (R) **8.00** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **8.30** Frasier. (R) **9.00** Jamie's Comfort Food. (R) **9.30** Sunday Brunch. **12.30** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **1.00** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **1.25** The Simpsons. (R) **2.00** The Simpsons. (R) **2.30** The Simpsons. (R) **3.00** **Film:** 10 Things I Hate About You. (1999) Comedy, starring Heath Ledger and Julia Stiles. **5.00** **Film:** Night at the Museum: Battle of the Smithsonian. (2009) Fantasy comedy sequel, starring Ben Stiller. **7.05** **Channel 4 News.** **7.30** **Britain's Wildest Weather 2014.** This year, the nation has been hit by tornados, floods, hurricanes and ferocious storms, as well as the chilliest August in more than two decades, but the public has also enjoyed the hottest Halloween on record. This documentary presents eyewitness footage of an unpredictable 12 months, featuring rescues at sea, homes struck by lightning, an escape for 500 cows, and sea foam that engulfs a bus. There's also a look at the science behind these wild weather events and why there may be worse to come. **9.00** **Homeland.** The security breach at the embassy has a number of far-reaching consequences as the fourth series of the CIA thriller continues. Claire Danes, Rupert Friend and Mandy Patinkin star. **10.00** **Film: Insidious.** (2010) A family driven from their house by a haunting discover the spirits have followed them to their new home and put their son into a coma. Horror, with Patrick Wilson and Rose Byrne. **12.00** Alan Carr: Chatty Man. The host is joined by Stephen Fry and Clare Balding, talking about their new books, and Micky Flanagan, discussing his latest DVD. Plus, Gorgon City perform with Jennifer Hudson. (R) **1.00** American Football Live. Philadelphia Eagles v Dallas Cowboys (Kick-off 1.30am). Coverage of the week 15 fixture from Lincoln Financial Field, where the NFC East rivals face each other. **4.45** NFL: Rush Zone. Animation about a young American football fan who must protect shards of a power source called The Core, which is hidden in various NFL stadiums. **5.10** Face the Clock. (R) **5.35** Countdown. Words-and-numbers game, with Dictionary Corner guest Aileen Phillips. (R)

CHANNEL 5

6.00 Milkshake!: Peppa Pig. **6.05** Roary the Racing Car. (R) **6.15** Angelina Ballerina. (R) **6.30** Pip Ahoy! (R) **6.40** The Mr Men Show. (R) **6.55** Chloe's Closet. (R) **7.05** Only the Little White Van. (R) **7.10** Bananas in Pyjamas. (R) **7.25** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **7.35** Paw Patrol. **7.50** Milkshake! Monkey. (R) **8.00** Little Princess. (R) **8.10** The Adventures of Bottle Top Bill and His Best Friend Corky. (R) **8.20** Wanda and the Alien. **8.35** Mio Mao. (R) **8.40** Zack and Quack. **8.50** Bert and Ernie's Great Adventures. (R) **9.00** Ben and Holly's Little Kingdom. (R) **10.00** Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. (R) **10.35** Access. (R) **10.45** Police Interceptors. (R) **11.45** Police Interceptors. (R) **12.40** **Film:** Dear Secret Santa. (2013) Premiere. Drama, starring Tatyana Ali. **2.30** **Film:** Deck the Halls. (2006) Christmas comedy, starring Danny DeVito and Matthew Broderick. **4.20** **Film:** Paper Angels. (2014) Premiere. Festive drama, starring Josie Bissett. **6.15** **Film: A Christmas Kiss.** (2011) Premiere. An aspiring designer impulsively kisses a man she meets in a lift, only to discover he is her boss's boyfriend. She is given the task of decorating his house for a lavish Christmas party, but begins to fall in love with him – while he does not remember their previous encounter. Romantic drama, with Laura Breckenridge, Brendan Fehr and Elisabeth Rohm. **8.00** **The Abba Years.** Documentary exploring the success of the Swedish group, featuring interviews with the band members and footage of concerts and stage shows. Filmed in Sweden and London, the programme explores the flamboyant outfits, chart-topping music, successful spin-offs, marriages and break-ups. (R) **9.00** **Michael Bublé's Christmas Special.** The Grammy-winning Canadian crooner performs classic festive songs. (R) **9.55** **5 News Weekend.** **10.00** **Britain's Favourite Christmas Songs.** A countdown of songs guaranteed to make any Christmas party go with a swing, including classics by the Jackson 5, Jona Lewie, Band Aid, Mud, the Pogues and Kirsty MacColl and Slade. (R) **1.00** Abba: In Concert. (R) **2.00** SuperCasino. **3.10** The World Strongman Championship. (R) **4.00** House Doctor. (R) **4.25** Make It Big. (R) **5.15** Angels of Jarm. (R) **5.40** Roary the Racing Car. (R)

DIGITAL

BBC Three
7.00 Great TV Mistakes **7.30** Doctor Who: The Ultimate Guide **7.40** Doctor Who: The Day of the Doctor **9.00** Top Gear: Polar Challenge **9.00** Family Guy **10.45** American Dad! **11.30** Some Girls **12.00** Sweat the Small Stuff **12.30** How Safe Are My Drugs? **1.30** The Revolution Will Be Televised **2.00** Some Girls
BBC Four
7.00 The Fairytale Castles of King Ludwig II with Dan Cruickshank **8.00** Rome: A History of the Eternal City **9.00** Pompeii: The Mystery of the People Frozen in Time **10.00** Pillars of Creation – The Sky at Night **10.30** Queen: Days of Our Lives **12.30** The American Rock Anthems: Turn It Up to 11 **1.30** Sounds of the Eighties **2.00** Natural World Special: Miracle in the Marshes of Iraq
ITV2
11.00 The X Factor **1.10** The Xtra Factor **2.10** Kylie Minogue, The Hot Desk **2.25** **Film:** Santa Baby (2006) **4.15** **Film:** Beethoven's Christmas Adventure (2011) **6.00** **Film:** The Polar Express (2004) **8.00** Scorpion **9.00** Educating Joey Essex: Winter Essex-Pedition **10.00** The Xtra Factor **11.00** Through the Christmas Keyhole **12.05** **Film:** American Pie Presents: The Naked Mile (2006) **2.10** The Vampire Diaries
ITV3
11.35 A Touch of Frost **1.35** Rosemary & Thyme **2.40** Agatha Christie's Marple **4.50** **Film:** Columbo: Forgotten Lady (1975) **6.50** Inspector Morse **9.00** Lewis **11.00** Cracker **1.15** **Film:** The Count of Monte Cristo (2002)
ITV4
11.35 **Film:** Captain Newman MD (1964) **2.10** **Film:** Ice Cold in Alex (1958) **4.50** **Film:** The Battle of Midway (1976) **7.30** Storage Wars **9.00** **Film:** Doom (2005) **11.05** **Film:** Species: The Awakening (2007) **1.10** River Monsters **2.10** Nitro Circus **2.50** ITV4 Nightscreen
E4
12.30 Made in Chelsea **1.30** **Film:** Step Up 3 (2010) **3.50** Rude(ish) Tube Shorts **4.00** Melissa & Joey **5.00** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **6.00** The Big Bang Theory **10.00** The Inbetweeners **11.10** Bad Robots **11.40** How I Met Your Mother **1.35** Rules of Engagement **2.30** The Cleveland Show
Film4
11.00 Dragoon Wells Massacre (1957) **1.00** The First Wives Club (1996) **3.05** Anastasia (1997) **5.00** Honey, I Blew Up the Kid (1992) **6.45** Percy Jackson & the Lightning Thief (2010) **9.00** Good Will Hunting (1997) **11.25** Good Morning, Vietnam (1987) **1.50** Sweetetrass (2009)

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MONDAY
The Real St Nick, Channel 5, 2pm
An injured man is brought into hospital dressed as Father Christmas, and when he comes round, he claims to really be Santa, landing himself in the psychiatric ward. Romantic comedy, with Torrey DeVitto and Callard Harris. (2012)

TUESDAY
Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix, ITV, 7.30pm
The young wizard struggles to convince his fellow sorcerers that the evil Lord Voldemort has returned to life. Fantasy adventure sequel, starring Daniel Radcliffe, Emma Watson, Rupert Grint, Gary Oldman, Michael Gambon and Alan Rickman. (2007)

Waterworld, ITV, 10.40pm
In the future, environmental disasters have left the planet flooded. A web-footed mutant mariner helps a woman and an orphan girl search for a mythical haven of dry land – but in the process has to fend off a villainous crew of nicotine-addicted pirates. Sci-fi adventure, starring Kevin Costner, Dennis Hopper, Jeanne Tripplehorn and Rick Aviles. (1995)



WEDNESDAY
The Bandit of Sherwood Forest, Channel 4, 2.35am
The son of Robin Hood reunites his father's merry men to carry out a rescue mission at the request of the Queen Mother. Swashbuckling adventure, starring Cornel Wilde and Anita Louise. (1946)

THURSDAY
Mr St Nick, Channel 5, 11.40am
Father Christmas decides it is time to hang up his hat and hand the reins of the family business over to his son – who is less than enthusiastic about donning the famed red suit, throwing the future of the festive season into doubt. Festive comedy, starring Kelsey Grammer, Charles Durning and Elaine Hendrix. (2002)

FRIDAY
Shoot 'Em Up, Channel 5, 10.50pm
A gun-toting mysterious stranger delivers a baby, which he is forced to protect from a horde of heavily armed assassins. Enlisting the aid of a prostitute, he sets out to discover why the child has been marked for death. Action adventure, starring Clive Owen, Paul Giamatti and Monica Bellucci. (2007)

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Jonathan is dishing out the gags and the gongs

Jonathan Ross fronts the 25th annual British Comedy Awards, and as you may have guessed, there's a wealth of comedic talent up for the assorted plaudits.

Among them is Joe Wilkinson, who's in the running with Matt Berry, Nick Helm and Harry Peacock for Best Comedy Breakthrough Artist.

The hirsute funnyman has become a TV regular over the last couple of years, popping up in sublime sitcom Him & Her, and assorted panel games, including Have I Got News For You and 8 Out of 10 Cats Does Countdown (both of which are up for Best Comedy Panel Programme).

But how did the Kent-born actor and comic make the leap from graphic designer to professional rib-ticker?

"I kind of enjoyed it (graphic design), but my heart was elsewhere," he explains. "I'd like to say that I orchestrated it, and it was all a big plan, but I wasn't really."

Joe had wanted to try his hand at comedy, but thought it was a club reserved for other people, until one fateful evening.

"My local pub was putting on open mic stand-up nights, so I went on and thought maybe I'll try but I won't tell anyone, and it was genuinely to go, 'Right, I've done it. Like a bungee jump sort of thing.'"

After his routine, Joe was amazed when he was asked if he wanted to do it again in the coming weeks.

"I thought: 'Oh, I hadn't really thought about doing it again.' So I did that a few months later, and then someone else booked me and it just sort of kept going."

"People kept booking me and I have no recollection of my first gig. I'm almost certain it wasn't brilliant," he laughs. "So it sort of just carried on from there. I'd love to say I had my five-point plan. I'm still sort of winging it if I'm honest."

Back to the Awards, and given the fact Will Ferrell was worshipped at last year's bash, there's no surprise to find last year's Anchorman 2 in the running for Best Comedy Film.

However, in case you're wondering why your favourite show or film from late September 2014 onwards isn't in the running this year, there's a good reason: programmes or performances must have had their first transmission in the UK between September 24, 2013 and September 22, 2014 on terrestrial, cable, satellite or digital channels.

Special gongs include The Writers' Guild of Great Britain Award (WGGB); Outstanding Achievement in Comedy; Lifetime Achievement in Comedy (the Python team may be in the running given their O2 gigs), and The King/Queen of Comedy.

Aisling Bea recently proved to be a superb guest on Never Mind the Buzzcocks, but will she manage to eclipse the likes of Bridget Christie, Isy Suttie or (2013 winner) Nina Conti in the Best Female Television Comic stakes?

Viewers should expect the unexpected, the unplanned and the unruly as some of the nation's favourite stars pick up their awards.

That remains to be seen, but one thing is for certain: as this year saw the passing of showbiz greats Robin Williams and Rik Mayall, there's bound to be a poignant moment as two of the best loved funnymen are remembered.



The British Comedy Awards 2014, Wednesday, Channel 4, 9pm

BEST OF THE REST

MONDAY
Bette Midler: One Night Only, ITV, 9pm
It's hard to believe that The Divine Miss M is a year shy of her 70th birthday – okay, so she's only just turned 69, we'll give her that – but in all this time in the limelight, she's never done a UK television special before. Until now. It's been 42 years since Midler released her debut album, so she's bound to have plenty of stories for us tonight, as she chats about her life and career. The Grammy Award-winner will also be performing her various hits, including Wind Beneath My Wings and From a Distance, as well as songs from her new album, It's the Girls, including a cover of The Ronettes' Be My Baby. The whole thing is hosted by Joanna Lumley.

Steph and Dom Meet Nigel Farage, Channel 4, 10pm
Steph and Dom Parker, owners of plush B&B The Salutation, have caused quite the stir on telly favourite Gogglebox. So what would happen if they were to come face to face with another of Britain's most opinionated personalities, UKIP's Nigel Farage? Wonder no more... This spin-off sees the Parkers joined by their local MP candidate, Farage, in a wine-fuelled evening, that's sure to leave him rather hot under the collar, thanks to all the questions they have got lined up for him.

TUESDAY
Black Mirror: White Christmas, Channel 4, 9pm
Charlie Brooker's dark drama series may seem like an odd choice to be given a Christmas special. However, there is a proud tradition of TV channels scaring us at Christmas, it's just that Brooker tends to do it via bleak visions of the future rather than ghost stories. This feature-length instalment brings us three yarns for the price of one, as in a remote, snowy outpost, charismatic Matt (Mad Men's Jon Hamm) and secretive Potter (Rafe Spall) swap tales about their lives on the outside world.

The Missing, BBC1, 9pm
Michael Palin's recent supernatural drama Remember Me may have been spooky, but some parents would probably argue that The Missing has been the most terrifying series of 2014. Poor Tony (James Nesbitt) only took his eyes of his five-year-old son for a split second in a crowded bar, but it was long enough for the youngster to disappear without a trace. Now, the investigation comes to an end, but will Tony, Emily and Julien finally get the answers they've been waiting for?

WEDNESDAY
Surprise Surprise, ITV, 8pm
Pop supergroup McBusted surprise one of their biggest fans with a performance on top of London's O2 arena, and former JLS member Marvin Humes makes a dream come true for an inspiring aid worker who came to the rescue of a Somerset village devastated by floods. Holly Willoughby presents.

THURSDAY
George Clarke's Amazing Christmas Spaces, Channel 4, 8pm
Architect George Clarke loves this series – it brings him into contact with some amazingly inventive souls who have dreamed up some mind-boggling projects, and usually on a budget. George rounds off the series with some builds with a Christmas theme. He's off

to visit a 130-year-old tin church, one of the earliest takes on flat-pack construction in the country. His mate Will Hardie takes a tour of another chapel, although this one has been transformed into a luxury home. The guys then help the UK's only female ice carver create a winter wonderland ice bar in Liverpool before looking back at their favourite builds of the series over drinks in Joel Bird's Shed of the Year-winning construction.

FRIDAY
Text Santa, ITV, 8pm
The festive fundraising extravaganza returns, with the evening's presenting duos – Ant and Dec, Phillip Schofield and Christine Bleakley, and Paddy McGuinness and Alesha Dixon – joined by a host of famous faces to raise money for six deserving causes. Highlights include George Clooney making a surprise visit to Downton Abbey, the residents of Coronation Street appearing in a comedy sketch with a Text Santa twist, and Ant and Dec hosting a Yule Tucker Trial for an unsuspecting celebrity while serenaded by a choir of former jungle contestants. The Birds of a Feather stars also get involved, The Cube welcomes some unexpected visitors and there are appearances by the casts of Mr Selfridge and Emmerdale, plus plenty of live music throughout the show.

Bette Midler: One Night Only, Monday, ITV, 9pm

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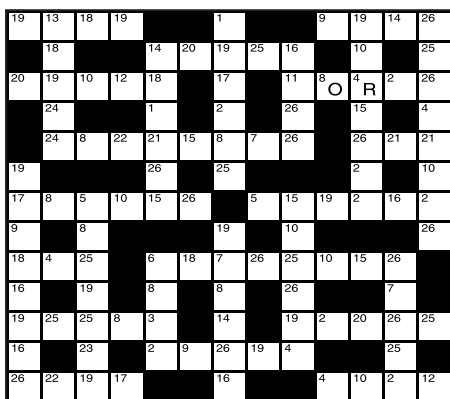
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Codeword

Each number in the grid represents a different letter of the alphabet and every letter of the alphabet is used. Use the given letter(s) to the right of the main grid to start you off.



LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION:

W	L	D	Z	S	X	Y	E	I	U	K	T	J
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
O	V	G	C	A	F	M	H	Q	B	N	R	P

1	14
2	15
3	16
4	17
5	18
6	19
7	20
8	21
9	22
10	23
11	24
12	25
13	26

Double Crossword

Choose either quick or cryptic clues - both fit the same grid.

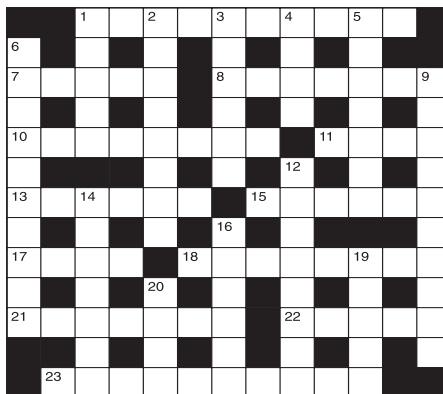
Cryptic Clues:

Across

1. The Sahara Express! (5,5)
7. Learner gets horribly sore, because he's been beaten (5)
8. French brass-hat sounds warlike (7)
10. Marks of sovereignty in various respects (8)
11. This is used for shooting slow-moving creature (4)
13. Furtively take one's leave of French settlement (6)
15. Robber gang is in front of it (6)
- 17 & 18Ac. A way of acquiring goods that sounds more expensive (4-8)
18. See 17 Across
21. One of the key players (7)
22. Curses a shot that has gone astray (5)
23. A storm seen to disturb a grampus (3-7)

Down

1. The social distinction of dramatic characters, we hear (5)
2. Record the hour, but make no progress (4,4)
3. Make flexible part of a gun carriage (6)
4. A combination of artist and engineer is seldom found (4)
5. Indulged in some inspiration? (7)
6. Union policy, maybe, shut down the store (6,4)
9. Lines in illuminated letters? (5,5)
12. Beware when the guard has gone forth! (5,3)
14. Concern about horse for slaughter (7)
16. Name the man who's very narrowly elected! (6)
19. See 20 Down
- 20 & 19Dn. He takes part on a set assignment (4,5)



Quick Clues:

Across

1. Recover (10)
7. Mountain ash (5)
8. Case (7)
10. Awful (8)
11. Correct (4)
13. Impel (6)
15. Run (6)
17. Sole (4)
18. Unfounded (8)
21. Rescuer (7)
22. Lift (5)
23. Competent (10)

Down

1. Oarsman (5)
2. Persuade (8)
3. Preserve (6)
4. Gown (4)
5. Shoot (7)
6. Voluntary (10)
9. Done wrong (10)
12. Unworried (8)
14. Transfer (7)
16. Structure (6)
19. Throw out (5)
20. Be idle (4)

Sudoku

	5	4		6				
		7		2		4	9	
	8			5	9			
	7				6	2	1	
4				7		1		3
		6	5				4	
	3		6	9			2	
2	1		7		5		9	
					8	7		

Fill in the grid below so that every column, every row and each of the 3x3 boxes contains all the digits from 1 to 9.

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTIONS >

1	3	2	9	4	6	8	7	5
7	9	6	1	8	5	3	4	2
6	4	5	2	7	3	1	9	8
3	7	9	8	5	2	4	6	1
5	1	4	7	6	9	2	3	8
2	6	8	3	1	4	9	5	7
6	5	3	4	2	8	7	1	9
9	2	1	5	3	7	6	8	4
4	8	7	6	9	1	5	2	3

LAST WEEK'S CROSSWORD SOLUTIONS: CRYPTIC - Across: 6 Capital; 7 Share; 9 Act; 10 Cross-wind; 12 Charge-hands; 15 Cheval-glass; 17 Hair style; 19 For; 21 Beans; 22 Haricot. Down: 1 Catch; 2 Fig; 3 Fair; 4 Show cause; 5 Grenade; 8 As well; 11 Shivering; 13 Relate; 14 Phrases; 16 Donor; 18 Leaf; 20 Bid. QUICK - Across: 6 Proceed; 7 Salad; 9 Fee; 10 Enlighten; 12 Persevering; 15 Indifferent; 17 Architect; 19 Try; 21 Steer; 22 Penalty. Down: 1 Order; 2 Act; 3 Keen; 4 Gathering; 5 Pageant; 8 Silver; 11 Delighted; 13 Safety; 14 Untruth; 16 Irate; 18 Crew; 20 Raw.

Quiz

1. Which German Nazi was known as the Butcher of Lyon?
2. By which name do we know the aquatic rodent Castor fiber?
3. Which fictional hero was created by Baroness Orczy?
4. Whose convalescent visit gave Bognor its Regis?
5. Which fabric causes the lung disease byssinosis?
6. Which popular cricket commentator died in January 1994?
7. Who, in Greek mythology, was the father of Jupiter, Neptune and Pluto?
8. Which author wrote J'Accuse, which concerned the Dreyfus affair?
9. What relationship is Oliver Reed to director Carol Reed?
10. Which city contains the residential district Beverly Hills?

Last week's solutions:

Quiz: 1 76 years; 2 Post scriptum; 3

Everton; 4 William Burroughs; 5 Felicity

Kendal; 6 Henrik Ibsen; 7 Jamaica; 8 Denis

Healey; 9 Greece; 10 Leicestershire.

Niner: PITEOUSLY

Niner

Each number from 1 to 9 represents a different letter. Solve the clues and insert the letters in the appropriate squares to discover a word which uses all nine letters.

1322 gives an animal,
57796 gives a bird,
5345678 gives a fish.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

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Imposing farmhouse in a lovely village location



THE Old Mill Farmhouse in Bromsgrove Road in the village of Clent is an imposing and versatile property with lots of features.

It is for sale through Andrew Grant at £895,000.

It has an entrance hall with stairs off and ceiling beams, a sitting room with wooden flooring and ceiling beams, a living room with ceiling beams and wooden flooring, a dining room with a brick fire surround and ceiling beams, a kitchen with two Belfast sinks, space for a range cooker with beams surrounding and an extractor, utility, ground floor WC, inner hallway, cellar. Further rooms include five bedrooms (master with dressing area and bathroom), two further en suites, a house bathroom, double garage, parking for a number of cars, a courtyard, gardens to the front and side. Contact Andrew Grant on 01384 370232 or visit www.andrew-grant.co.uk



Luxury home with a swimming pool

AN EXTENDED five-bedroomed residence in Hagley, at 28 Kinner Drive, has fantastic views and an indoor swimming pool.

It is for sale through The Lee Shaw Partnership at £675,000. With double glazing and gas central heating it has a reception hall and staircase off to a galleried landing, an office with fitted furniture, WC, lounge with a bespoke, granite wall mounted fire a pool complex with heated swimming pool with electric cover, changing area and steam room, screen and projector and sound system. There is also a dining room, a kitchen with granite worktops, integrated appliances, feature vertical radiator and five bedrooms (master en suite). Contact 01562 888111 or visit www.leeshaw.com



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GORNAL



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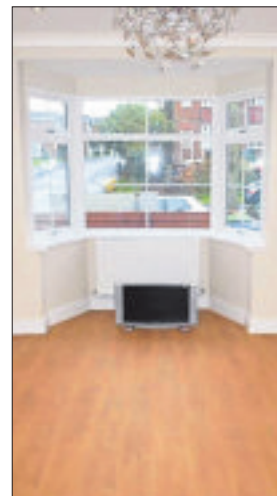
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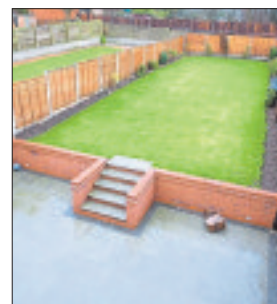
PROPERTY

Five-bed semi has had major improvements



THIS five-bedroomed semi-detached house in Moat Road, Oldbury, is recently extended.

Boasting an extensive kitchen with a breakfast island, it is for sale through Connells at £255,000 with no chain. It has a porch, entrance hall, lounge with laminate flooring and double doorsto a kitchen/diner with electric oven and five ring gas hob with cooker hood, dishwasher, speaker system, mood lighting and spotlights, separate dining area and patio doors to the garden, a ground floor shower room, five bedrooms, bathroom, a garage and gardens. Call Connells 0121 5522671 or visit www.connells.co.uk



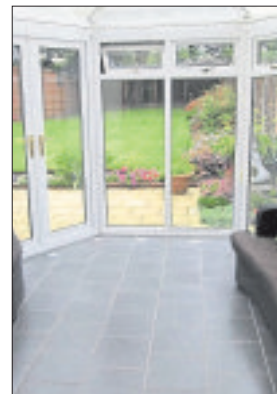
Three-storey Victorian home has six bedrooms



THIS traditional Victorian three-storey six-bedroomed semi in Heath Lane, West Bromwich, is for sale through Bairstow Eves at offers over £269,950.

The accommodation includes an entrance hall, reception room with a gas fire, kitchen, utility room, WC, downstairs shower room, reception room with wooden flooring, gas fire and original French doors with stained glass leading into a conservatory. Off the first floor landing is bedroom one, bedroom two with original feature windows and bedroom three with doors leading to a roof terrace. There is also a fully tiled bathroom, WC, three second floor bedrooms and a bathroom. A rear garden has a patio and shed.

Contact 0121 5444554 or visit www.bairstoweves.co.uk



French flair, c'est si chic

By Ian Donaldson

It looks good in a cheeky, properly modern way and its little engine lives under the boot floor, to intrigue the techies among us; both features giving the new Twingo a promising start in life.

It's got a lot to live up to. Version one arrived in 1992 and was an instant hit, with just the right amount of French chic to sit it at the top of many twenty-somethings' automotive wish lists across mainland Europe.

The success of their baby may even have surprised its parent, for no right-hand drive was ever offered. Didn't stop some Brits buying, and loving, the left-handed model, whose comparative narrowness helped a helmsman sitting on the wrong side of the car.

Twingo II arrived in 2007, was available with UK-sided steering and sold tolerably well, despite losing its charm and looking like any number of other small family hatchbacks.

Now comes Twingo III and Renault has found its small car mojo again, with added practicality thanks to a bold decision to switch ends for the engine.

That move pays off in several ways, from allowing a stretched passenger cabin despite being shorter overall (and now with four passenger doors for the first time), to letting the front wheels turn much more sharply, for a turning circle that will make drivers chuckle the first time they make a U-turn on a narrow country road.

Other car makers stick to the usual front engine, front-wheel drive formula because

to change would cost a fortune. Renault can take the rearward route because it's sharing design costs with Mercedes-owned Smart, whose own version of the car is due soon, and looks like an update of the original, rear-engined cutie you see tucked into unlikely parking spots all over European cities.

Packing the engine away at the back doesn't badly compromise boot space, which can anyway be boosted by folding down the rear seats. The front passenger seat backrest flops forward too, allowing you to carry 'a Swedish flat-pack bookcase'. So that's the trip to Ikea sorted, then.

There are more storage areas in the doors and under the rear seat, although a wobbly lidded bin in front of the gearlever was soon dispatched to the rear in the test car as it snagged the driver's left leg.

Every new Twingo has four doors. Renault says the popularity of two-door city cars is falling by the month and has styled its new baby with hidden releases at the rear, for the more coupe look of a two-door but with added practicality. Mums with babies to clip into the rear will thank Renault particularly.

Prices of the new Twingo range from £9,495 to £11,695, with all but the dearest using the same 1.0 litre engine and clearly aimed at a life in the city. The most expensive version actually has a slightly smaller (898cc) engine but with a power boosting turbo fitted for more convincing out of town performance.

The smaller engine is expected to take most sales and was a charming companion on the test route that took in hills and city centre and a decent stretch of dual carriageway too.



'Renault has found its small car mojo again, with added practicality thanks to a bold decision to switch ends for the engine.'

It makes the familiar throb of other three-cylinder power units and, allied to a crisp gearchange and light steering, soon had this driver smiling at the brio of this little charmer.

The more powerful version was noticeably quicker but felt coarser and the gearchange and steering were less user friendly.

It did, however, record 46mpg on the briskly driven test route compared to a disappointing 40mpg of the smaller engine

Twingo, perhaps because it needed less peddle to the metal coaxing.

Like many new small cars, there is a world of personalisation for buyers, who can add different coloured parts all around the interior and body flashes and bolder alloys on the outside. Smartphones can be attached to a dashboard cradle, adding satellite navigation and your music library at a fingertip stretch. The top Dynamique trim of the test car includes cruise control, alloy wheels and air conditioning.

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Official Government Test Environmental Data. Fuel consumption figures mpg (litres/100km) and CO₂ emissions (g/km). Lowest: Vauxhall Corsa 3 Door Hatchback 1.2i 85PS 16v Excite A/C with 14", 15" and 16" wheels, M5: Urban: 39.2 (7.2), Extra-urban: 62.8 (4.5), Combined: 51.4 (5.5). CO₂ emissions: 129g/km. Highest: Vauxhall Corsa 3 dr Hatchback 1.6i 16V 192PS VXR Turbo (A/C) with 17" wheels, M6: Urban: 28.8 (9.8), Extra-urban: 47.9 (5.9), Combined: 38.7 (7.3). CO₂ emissions: 172g/km

Available at participating retailers only. Conditional Sale. Offers available on orders or registrations made by 31st December 2014. Official EU-regulated test data are provided for comparison purposes and actual performance will depend on driving style, road conditions and other non-technical factors. Picture for illustration purposes only. *All quotations are subject to credit approval. Vauxhall Leasing reserves the right to amend quotations in the event of changes to manufacturer prices, interest rates and volume related bonus. Vauxhall Leasing reserve the right to amend quotations in the event of any change to VAT/RFL or any other statutory charges or taxes which may become appropriate from time to time. The Excess PPM (price per mile) figures represent the price up to 9,999 miles followed by the price over 9,999 miles. ALD Automotive Ltd, trading as Vauxhall Leasing, Oakwood Park, Lodge Causeway, Fishponds, Bristol BS16 3JA. Reg No. 987418 England.



Great used cars and more

It's obviously always a good thing to find lots of cars and plenty of choice when visiting a used car dealership. The Car Lot can offer you all this and a whole lot more.

Established in 1995, The Car Lot is owned by business partners Neil Foxall and Keith Arnold who joined forces with the aim of providing high quality used cars at affordable prices. They opened for business at their first site in Old Hill in November 1995 and expanded just two years later by buying a workshop on the Waterside Industrial Estate in Dudley.

In 2002, with the business thriving, they purchased the premises in Netherton where they operate today. In 2006 Neil and Keith purchased a building across the road, and a new workshop, MOT centre and tyre bay was created. This meant that they were able to convert the workshop facility at the dealership into an indoor car showroom where a selection of vehicles is displayed.

Proton arrived in 2007 and very soon after taking on the franchise The

Car Lot was acknowledged by Proton as one of its top performing UK dealerships. Impressive, all-new models are on the way from Proton in 2015 which promises to be a great year for the Malaysian manufacturer as it will be offering some outstanding new models at exceptional, value for money prices.

As a Proton main dealer this company has supplied new cars to customers through the Motability scheme. As an established Motability dealer, The Car Lot is able to supply ex-Motability vehicles that have been superbly maintained.

There's an enormous choice of used cars displayed covering every market sector, all of which will have been prepared to an impressively high standard having been subjected to an HPI vehicle history check, safety inspections, a full service and when needed, an MOT. What's more, all come with reassuring AA warranty guaranteeing high standards. Prices are extremely competitive and finance can be arranged for most customers, even for those who may have struggled to find finance facilities.

Neil Foxall says: "We take great pride in our preparation and aftersales

care, and place an emphasis on delivering customer satisfaction. This has enabled us to build up an enviable reputation over the years, and as a result, we've managed to attain great customer loyalty with many of our sales arriving through repeat business and word of mouth recommendation."

Neil continues: "Our skilled technicians can maintain and repair any make or model of car. They have the facilities to perform all work to a high level and access to the best diagnostic systems to track and correct faults quickly. A considerable number of local company fleet customers rely on us to keep their fleets where they belong, on the road."

If you're looking for great savings on quality used cars, or need your current vehicle maintained, why not pay The Car Lot a visit. The Car Lot is at 205-215 Halesowen Road, Netherton, Dudley DY2 9PU. They're open from 9.00am to 6.30pm Monday to Friday, on Saturday from 9.00am to 6.00pm while on Sundays the car sales department is open between 10.00am and 4.00pm. Call 01384 241222 or visit www.carlotmotors.co.uk to find out more.

Ho, ho, ho! Santa back in town at Halesowen Autos

Why not pay Santa a visit at Halesowen Motors and whilst you are there, take a look at the great choice of quality used cars available? Or you could just say 'Bah humbug' to Santa and buy a quality used car instead.

Halesowen Autos aims to offer the best quality and lowest priced used cars on the market this winter. They have a superb selection of quality used vehicles on offer and when visiting Halesowen Autos, you are always guaranteed great value for money. Their friendly sales team have over

20-years of experience in the motor trade. They are open most days for viewing, test drives or just some friendly advice. There is no high pressure selling and they guarantee a test drive with no obligation to buy.

Halesowen Autos pride themselves on the presentation of their cars. All their vehicles are prepared to the highest standards. You can also part exchange any vehicle, even if it is of greater value.

Halesowen Autos are a licensed credit broker, so if you require finance to assist with the purchase of your car, then they can offer you a range of competitively priced packages at great interest rates that can be tailored to

your specific circumstances. All their vehicles are HPI and VOSA checked for outstanding finance, accident history and mileage discrepancies.

A comprehensive warranty is available on most cars and AA, RAC or any independent inspection are welcomed. Delivery is also available in the UK for a reasonable charge.

Why not call into Halesowen Autos this winter and take a look at the great selection of cars they have on offer? You can find them at 1 Cross Street, Halesowen, West Midlands B63 4RT or, for further information, telephone them on 0121 501 3840.

You can also visit their website at www.halesowenautos.co.uk



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<p>08/08 Saab 9-3 Vector Sport DTH Diesel Automatic Estate 80k, Grey, Two Tone Leather, Alloys £5995 / £35 Per Week</p>	<p>08/08 Nissan Micra 1.2 16v (79bhp) Acenta+ 3dr, 48k, Grey Metallic, *LOW INSURANCE* Air Con £3995 / £23 Per Week</p>
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<p>09/09 Vauxhall Corsa 1.3 SXI CDTi Diesel 3dr, 52k, Grey Metallic, Alloys, Air Con £4995 / £30 Per Week</p>	<p>07/07 Suzuki Swift 1.3 GL one owner 47k, Burnt Orange, CD Player, E/Windows £3995 / £22 Per Week</p>
<p>04/04 Audi A4 Sport 1.9 TDI 130 Automatic 72k, Silver, Alloys, Air Con £4995 / £29 Per Week</p>	<p>05/05 Ford Mondeo 2.0 TDCi 115 6sp LX Diesel *ONLY 46k MILES* Beige Metallic, Air Con, CD Player £3295 / £18 Per Week</p>
<p>07/07 Ford Fusion 1.6 TDCi Plus Diesel 48k, Silver, *ONLY £30 ROAD TAX* *AVERAGE 62 MPG* Alloys £4695 / £27 Per Week</p>	<p>07/07 Kia Picanto 1.1 LS 53k, Silver, *LOW INSURANCE* *ONE OWNER* CD Player £2995 / £17 Per Week</p>
<p>07/07 Renault Kangoo 1.6 Expression Automatic *ONLY 23k MILES* Red, E/Windows £4495 / £26 Per Week</p>	<p>07/07 Ford Ka 1.3 Zetec Climate *ONLY 23k MILES* Silver, *LOW INSURANCE* Air Con, Alloys, CD Heated Screen £2995 / £17 Per Week</p>
<p>08/08 Vauxhall Tigra 1.4i 16v Exclusiv Hard Top Convertible 44k, Ice Blue Metallic, Black Leather, Alloys £4495 / £26 Per Week</p>	<p>05/05 Vauxhall Vectra 1.9 CDTi Club 90k, Grey Metallic, Alloys, Air Con, CD Player £2495 / £14 Per Week</p>
<p>08/08 Fiat Panda 1.4 100hp, 39k, *LOW INSURANCE* Black, Alloys, Air Con, CD £4295 / £25 Per Week</p>	<p>04/04 Rover 45 1.8 CVT Club SE AUTOMATIC 5dr, *ONE OWNER* *ONLY 19k MILES* Silver, Alloys £2195 / £12 Per Week</p>

Finance example: Vauxhall Corsa 1.3 SXI Diesel, Cash Price £4995, Deposit £300, Amount of credit £4695, Fixed interest rate 6.25% Flat rate, 12% APR, 48 Payments of £122.28 (£30.50 per week) Total amount payable £6169.44 (Excludes £150 Document fee and £150 Completion fee, Subject to status)

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Zafira hits the spot for Dudley care firm

Commercial feature

When it came to replacing their three Ford Galaxy MPV's, Quest Day Care, owned and run by Diane and Paul Thompson, wanted to continue to emphasise their 'green' focus within the business and so looked to find the best vehicle to meet their needs. They found that vehicle in the form of the Vauxhall Zafira Tourer from Dudley Motor Company.

Quest Day Care work closely with Dudley Social Services in the care of people with learning difficulties. The vehicles are an integral part of the service they provide for the local community and the three new seven-seater Zafira models have been an instant success providing a 25 per cent saving in fuel costs while only emitting 109 gms/km of Co2. The care centre do a significant amount of travelling each year so these savings both in fuel and emissions are very important to the business.

Paul added: "The new Vauxhall Zafira Tourers are proving a great success, so much so that when we come to renew other vehicles in our fleet, the Zafira Tourer is likely to be top of our wish list."

Diane and Paul's business is an ideal example of how local companies like Dudley Motor Company work with businesses in their community to find winning solutions. You can find Dudley Motor Company on Trindle Road, Dudley, West Midlands, DY2 7AY or for further information, telephone 01384 454100.

You can also visit www.dudleymotorco.co.uk

Newcomer

Vauxhall is set to tighten its already strong grip on the MPV segment with the all-new Zafira Tourer. The newcomer, which is positioned above the current Zafira in Vauxhall's line up, has set new standards in flexibility and innovation.

The all-new model builds on the chart-topping success of the well-proven Zafira, while offering improved cabin space, upgraded materials and even greater levels of innovation from the upgraded Flex7 seating arrangement.

With class-leading levels of luxury and prices starting at just £21,000 (more than £1,200 less than the Ford S-Max) the seven-seater Zafira Tourer is expected not only to attract traditional MPV customers, but also those customers who may never have considered such a vehicle.

The Zafira Tourer combines a compelling mix of cabin flexibility with many features and technologies taken from the luxury car sector. There are multiple seating configurations, including 'Lounge Seating' on key models, as well as a raft of new features, such as Vauxhall's new Front Camera system and state-of-the-art infotainment.

But what really defines the Zafira Tourer is its use of quality cabin materials, which sets new class standards.

Vauxhall's Vice President of Design, Mark Adams, has created a spacious and inviting environment for occupants, offering near-panoramic views for driver and passengers. Now, this new model bearing the Zafira name is transformed from a utilitarian people carrier into a flexible limousine that many executive car drivers would feel comfortable living with.

Since 1999, the two iterations of the current Vauxhall Zafira have dominated the compact MPV sector in the UK. Across Europe, 2.2 million have been sold, with almost a quarter of those sales coming from the UK.

And that performance has not diminished in recent years. In 2010, the Vauxhall Zafira was top of its segment in total, fleet and retail sales in the UK with a 24.3 per cent share of the total compact MPV market after registering more than 30,000 units. The Renault Scenic had the next biggest share, though with 11,346 fewer sales than the Zafira.

This year, the Zafira is as popular as ever, commanding top slot in total and fleet sales to date. With 14,855 sales to the end of August, Zafira sales represent 18.1 per cent of the compact MPV market, and combined with Vauxhall's other compact MPV, the Meriva, they account for 36.1 per cent share of the compact MPV segment.



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07/57	BMW 116 SE 3-door, Grey, 43,000 miles	£6995	13/13	INSIGNIA 1.8 Exclusiv Blue, 5-door, 33,000 miles	£8995
13/62	VAUXHALL ASTRA 2.0 CDTi 16v SRi (165) Start Stop, Diesel, Estate, Sat nav, Grey, 15,000 miles	£12,995	13/63	VAUXHALL ASTRA SPORTS TOURER TECHLINE Sat Nav, 10,000 miles, Blue, Ex Demo	£15,995
14/14	VAUXHALL VIVARO 2.0 CDTi (115PS) Sportive Van 2.9t Euro 5 LWB Diesel, White, Delivery miles	£13,995+VAT	13/13	INSIGNIA 1.8 Exclusiv Black, 5-door, 33,000 miles	£8995
13/13	VAUXHALL ASTRA GTC 1.7 CDTi 16V 130 Sport Diesel Red, 13,000 miles	£13,650	08/58	VAUXHALL ASTRA ELITE Auto 1.8 Grey, Leather Trim, 46,000 miles	£4995
14/63	VAUXHALL ASTRA 1.7 CDTi 16V ecoFLEX SRi (130) Start Stop Diesel White, Estate, 12,000 miles	£12,995	11/11	VAUXHALL CORSA 1.4 SE 5-dr, Silver, 35,000 miles	£6995
12/62	VAUXHALL ASTRA 2.0 CDTi SRi Black, 5-door, 30,000 miles	£6995	13/63	VAUXHALL CORSA 1.6 VXR Black, 3-door, 7,000 miles	£14,995
14/14	VAUXHALL VIVARO 1.6 SWB Diesel, New Shape/New Model, Silver, delivery miles	£14,995+VAT	06/06	VAUXHALL CORSA 1.4 SXi Silver, 3-door, 54,156 miles	£3995
13/13	VAUXHALL INSIGNIA 2.0 CDTi (160) SRi Grey, 22,000 miles, Tourer	£14,250	05/55	PEUGEOT 107 1.0 Urban Black, 3-door, 48,721 miles	£3495
12/61	PEUGEOT 207 Convertible Sport, Black, 16,000 miles	£8495	09/59	RENAULT CLIO 1.2 DYNAMIQUE Red, 39,000 miles	£5495
10/10	ZAFIRA 1.9 ENERGY GDTi Auto, Blue, 27,000 miles	£7995	05/05	VW TOURAN 1.9 S Diesel Silver, 5-door, 61,480 miles	£5495
13/63	CORSA 1.2 Limited Edition White, 3-door, 7,500 miles	£9995	06/56	RENAULT SCENIC 1.6 Gold, 5-door, 31,511 miles	£3495
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12/12	VAUXHALL INSIGNIA SRi NAV CDTi Black, 35,000 miles ...	£10,995	09/59	FORD KA 1.2 STUDIO Red, 33,658 miles	£4995
09/59	AGILA DESIGN 1.2 Blue, 32,000 miles	£5995	08/08	VAUXHALL CORSA 1.4 Design Blue, 3-door, 61,552 miles	£4795
11/11	ASTRA SRi 1.6 Auto, Silver, 42,000 miles	£7495	09/59	SMART 1.0 Fourtwo Passion Silver, 3-door, 25,600 miles	£4495
08/08	VAUXHALL ASTRA BREEZE Black, 8,000 miles	£5495	10/60	FORD KA 1.2 STUDIO Black, 21,000 miles	£5995
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04/04	MG ZS 2.0 TD Blue, 89,000 miles	£1995	05/55	VAUXHALL ZAFIRA 1.6 Breeze Blue, 5-door, 59,998 miles	£3495
12/62	CORSA 1.2 SE Pepperdust, 5-door, 25,000 miles	£7750	09/09	KIA RIO 1.5 CRD CHILL DIESEL Blue, 56,000 miles	£4495
11/61	CORSA 1.4 SE Black, 5-door, 14,000 miles	£7250	06/56	VAUXHALL CORSA 1.4 SXi Silver, 3-door, 45,258 miles	£4850
13/63	ASTRA 1.4 Exclusiv Asteroid Grey, 5-door, 16,000 miles	£8995	03/03	RENAULT CLIO 1.2 Authentique Black, 3-door, 25,927 miles	£2650
10/60	VAUXHALL MERIVA SE 1.4 Silver, 25,000 miles	£7490	05/05	VAUXHALL ASTRA CONVERTIBLE 1.8 Blue, 40,000 miles	£2995
07/07	KIA SORENTO CRDi XT 4x4 AUTO Silver, 55,000 miles	£9995	07/07	VAUXHALL ASTRA 1.6 Life Grey, 5-door, 77,400 miles	£3650
09/58	INSIGNIA S 2.0 CDTi Black, 71,000 miles	£6250	08/08	PEUGEOT 207 1.6 Sport XS Blue, 3-door, 26,000 miles	£5495
			06.56	VAUXHALL CORSA 1.0 SE Black, 3-door, 52,695 miles	£2995
			11/61	FORD KA 1.2 Edge Silver, 3-door, 17,527 miles	£6395
			07.57	CHEVROLET KALOS 1.2 S Black, 5-door, 32,829 miles	£2695

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6 Property

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FIAT PUNTO 3dr, 52 plate, 60,000 miles, MoT 2015, black, ideal first car, good condition. £1,099. 07967 732028.

FORD FIESTA Finesse, 1.3, 52 reg, MoT June 2015, 88,400 miles, CL, PAS, £995 ono. 07749 036097.

FORD FIESTA FLIGHT, 2001, red, 3 door, 47,500 miles, MoT till June, £600 ono. Telephone 07976 249031.

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FORD FOCUS, 2004, 79,000 miles, silver, long MoT, £1,200 ono. 01902 892182.

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FORD KA 55 plate, blue, 89k miles, lady owner, 10 months MoT, £750. Call 01902 258715 / 07739 465623.

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PEUGEOT 206 2004, grey colour, 5dr, MoT July 2015, 61,000 miles, very good condition. AC, EW, PAS, £1,100. 07936 887643.

PEUGEOT 206LX 3dr, 2000 X reg, 1124cc, EW, CL, blue, 75k miles, full MoT service history, excellent driver. £695. 07977 458066.

PEUGEOT 307 2.0HDI, 2003, 140,000 miles, 9 months MoT, diesel, £650 ono. 07974 480508.

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RENAULT Clio ALIZE 2000, full MoT, service history, electric, lovely condition, £550. 07946 681526.

RENAULT Clio, blue, 05, 5 door, 12 months MoT, ew, c/d, CD player, good condition, cheap to run, £1,350 ono. 07535 074158.

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FEMALE looking for male any age for fun, meet ups, friendship and take it from there. Text Only Mailbox Box No: 4550576

YOUNG looking female, likes rock music, concerts, theatre seeks Rock male with similar interests for relationship. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 415249

MANDY very attractive, slim single mum 36yrs, employed, OHAC, looking to share some quality times with similar genuine kind hearted social male/dad. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 415409

SOPHIA young 40yrs, married but bored, seeks discreet adult fun, any area, any car, answered. Tel No: 0905 002 1883 Box No: 413399

DIANE attractive singleton seeks male to have some fun with, meals out, cinema, dancing and just see where things lead from there. Age/race unimportant. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 415373

LUCY, 32yrs, blonde lady seeks naughty boys of any age for no strings fun. Tel No: 0905 002 1887 Box No: 413443

SHELIA Asian 20yr old female, very pretty, feminine with long hair, enjoys nights in or out, seeking mature white male 55plus for discreet fun. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 415181

ADVENTUROUS sexy lady, 38yrs, married but seeks no strings fun with discreet man, any age. I'm tall, slim and dominant. Aca. Tel No: 0905 002 1937 Box No: 415301

MARGARET 39, attractive active female likes animals, reading, meals in/out, seeking considerate partner for good laughs, companionship, shared interests and more. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 414727

LUCY, broadminded 18yrs seeks discreet fun with men any age. Aca. Tel No: 0905 002 1941 Box No: 365051

KAREN 50, widow, likes swimming, horse riding, keep fit, clay pigeon shooting, GSOH, N/S, non drinker, seeks male. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 415211

SEXY brunette, mid 20's busty, adventurous broad minded seeks no strings fun. Tel No: 0905 002 1949 Box No: 361739

BUBBLY larger than life 28yr old blonde bombshell, seeks large built male to fulfil my every fantasy! Give me a call! I will totally make your day maybe even your year. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 414977

SALLY, 38yrs large cuddly lady seeks slim men for discreet meetings. Text Only 4550193

BARBARA 38 slim sporty bistractive blonde, varied interests, single and ready to date, seeks kind honest guy for shared interests, fun nights out, hopefully leading to more. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 414967

TRUDY 36yrs, wtm broadminded men of any age/area for day time meetings. Text Only 4550194

JULIE single petite attractive big blue eyed brunette, loves cooking a cosy meal in, nights out, searching for real love with genuinely nice guy. Looks unimportant. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 414491

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JEAN petite female who enjoys golf, days out, cosy evenings in, holidays, WLTm older male in his 60's with a good personality and big heart. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 412359

MELANIE, 38, slim, blonde and bored. Call if you want no strings fun. Text Only 4550198

GOOD looking professional lady, 56, enjoys the arts, country walks, meals out, seeks compatible, genuine, professional gent to enjoy the good things in life. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 415007

JENNI, 52 bored housewife wants no strings fun with younger chap. Text Only 4550197

ANGIE 38yrs slim blonde, ex model with lovely long legs with shapely figure, fit, toned, sporty, confident but warm, WLTm similar perceptive, sensitive individual for ltr. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 414723

BECKY stunning big blue eyed 38yr old honest, caring and fun person looking for nice times with similar outgoing fun guy, status/age unimportant. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 414391

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Boss of Tividale voices anger

TIVIDALE boss Ian Long has admitted his anger with his side's display in the 4-3 defeat to Norton United and challenged his players to raise their level.

The club are without a home league win since August and Long went as far as to say that the reversal in the match at The Beeches was the worst night of his tenure.

"We want to bounce back immediately," added the Tivs boss.

"We've score three goals, which has been our problem all season, but still managed to lose.

"It was the worst performance I've witnessed since joining the club and it was totally unacceptable." "If you take away Leek last week, our away form of recent months has been excellent," Long said.

"It was the total opposite of what I was expecting at this level, you usually make your home the foundation and nick what you can on the road," said Long.

"But for whatever reason we are struggling at our place."

If Tividale progress to the next stage of the cup they will face a trip to Sutton Coldfield's ground sharers, Romulus.

Wolves get Fulham in Cup draw

WOLVES have been handed a trip to Craven Cottage in the third round of the FA Cup with Albion given a plum tie with non-league side Gateshead.

Kenny Jackett's men have happy memories of playing Fulham this season, after Bakary Sako bagged the winner as Wolves claimed the Championship points with a 1-0 victory.

Under-pressure Baggies boss Alan Irvine will welcome a run in the famous old competition and his side have been given a huge chance of making it through to round four after being paired with the north-east outfit. Villa are at home against Blackpool.

Games will be played between January 3-6.

Tividale squander two goal lead to share spoils

M Drayton 2 Tividale 2

TIVIDALE ended a run of four straight league Evo-Stik Division One South defeats but squandered a two-goal lead at Market Drayton.

Despite plenty of Tividale possession and looking threatening, the first chance on 10 minutes fell to Market Drayton as Aiden Houghton fired wide and six minutes later it was Michael O'Reilly's turn to shoot wide.

Tividale's first clear chance came when a Deqwon Ebanks effort was saved by Drayton keeper Daniel Read. Tividale went agonisingly close on 30 minutes when a Ebanks

Football

header from a Zac Foster cross came back off the crossbar.

Then Drayton's early substitute Joe Donaldson struck the bar with the goal at his mercy. Tividale had another great chance to take the lead when a Chris Fields shot was deflected over the line by Karl Edwards but it was ruled offside.

The visitors opened the scoring on 37 minutes when Edwards pounced on a Danny Ashton cross into the near post and

gave Read no chance. On the stroke of half-time they should have extended their lead when David Bellis ran straight through the Drayton back line only to have his shot brilliantly blocked by Read. The ball fell nicely to Ashton with an open goal in front of him and he took a touch but then shot wide of the post.

Drayton had the second half's first effort on goal when a Cohen Bramall free-kick was parried by Price but William Whieldon failed to control the rebound and he blazed over.

On 57 minutes a Foster free-kick was met by the head of Edwards but again Read

saved well. Tividale doubled their lead on the hour when Ebanks got his reward for his hard work up front when he latched onto a poor Drayton clearance and beat Read with his shot.

Six minutes later Drayton halved the deficit when a Tividale error let in Jordan Johnson and he made no mistake when left one on one with Price.

Drayton now had the momentum and poured men forward while Tividale were struggling to keep the ball out of their own half and on 76 minutes came the inevitable. Tividale failed to clear and a Whieldon cross was headed home by James Askey.

Yeltz grab another victory on the road

Grantham 0 Halesowen 2

THE Yeltz claimed yet another win on the road, as two first half goals from Halesowen put the game out of reach for Grantham.

The Yeltz made two changes to the side that overcame Gresley last Saturday, as Ben Haseley and Tom Tonks returned to the side, taking the place of Robert Thompson-Brown and Elliot Turner.

Halesowen dominated the first half, and they had their opening chance came on 14 minutes.

Haseley played the ball through to Iysenden Christie who skipped past two Grantham players before his shot crashed off the underside of the bar and came back out into play.

Grantham had their chances as well, as Stefan Bilyk managed to find space a couple of yards out and smash the ball towards goal, but he was denied brilliantly by Matt Sargeant.

The Yeltz kept up the pressure on the home side and eventually found the crack in the home side's defence with less than half hour of the game gone.

Grantham could only hold out for so long, and on 27 minutes the game turned with Yeltz taking control of the game away from Grantham.

Tonks threw a long ball into the box, and Haseley was there to jump up and nod the ball into the net to give the Yeltz a lead which they refused to relinquish and even when on to consolidate their lead 15 minutes later.

The Yeltz doubled their lead on 42 minutes, as goalkeeper Dan Haystead hit the

Football

ball up to the halfway line, but he failed to get back to his line quick enough, as Christie hit the ball back up field almost instantly, and he was able to watch the ball fly into the net.

The second half was a different affair between the sides, as it turned out to be a quiet 45 minutes.

The best chance of the half came from Grantham's Rhys Lewis.

With an eye on sparking a come back he ran with the ball up to the 18-yard box, but he could only hit the ball wide of the right hand post leaving the Yeltz in the lead.

Halesowen fortunately didn't have any more injury worries and claimed all three points and they moved closer to the top half of the table.

The Yeltz have moved up to 14th place, while Grantham have only claimed one win in their last seven games.

Yeltz: Sargeant, Green, Griffiths, Forde, Hull, Tilt, Kettle, Tonks (Turner), Christie (Mackenzie), Haseley (Lait), Bragoli.

Subs: Thompson-Brown, Pearson

Parra could take over Dicko's striker spot



Former players and Malcolm Finlayson's family members pay tribute

RAJIV VAN LA PARRA could fill the Nouha Dicko void up front and become a winger-turned-striker, insisted Wolves boss Kenny Jackett after watching the Dutchman flourish in the new role.

The summer arrival impressed on his first start in a striking role alongside Danny Graham until a harsh red card curtailed his involvement in Saturday's 2-1 loss to Bournemouth.

Jackett hopes to get that dismissal

overturned on appeal and says Van La Parra brings a welcome alternative up front, especially with Dicko sidelined by hamstring trouble.

The Wolves boss said: "We've been lacking pace since Dicko's been injured certainly in that front position. And van La Parra's athleticism was a constant threat against Bournemouth so to lose him – and I felt to lose him unjustly – was a big part of the game.

"Not just to go down to 10 men but I felt you could see our forward threat diminish after that."

"He's an option, definitely."

● Ahead of the game, Wolves remembered legendary keeper Malcolm Finlayson, who passed away last month.

Mike Bailey, Ron Flowers, Phil Parkes and Derek Parkin joined members of Malcolm's family for a minute's silence prior to kick-off.

Greaves coming back to Heathens

CRADLEY fans' favourite Nathan Greaves has agreed a deal which will see him back at the club for a third successive season in 2015.

Greaves was unveiled as the club's second signing for their move to Perry Barr in front of a packed audience at the Heathens Children's Club Christmas Party at Cradley Heath Liberal Club.

And his appearance in front of the youngsters went down well after he made the journey from his South Yorkshire base to meet fans.

Greaves is already preparing for the 2015 campaign and says he is "over the moon" to be back with the Heathens for a shot at a hat-trick of league titles.

He said: "I would never really want to leave Cradley – who would? I want a third straight league title!"

"They're a massive club with great fans and they're definitely the best team in the National League so I'm delighted."

"Last season I know I improved my average and I know I've come on a heck of a lot since first signing for the club, but I want to make sure that I improve even further in 2015. I want to push myself as much as I can and 2015 is going to be a big year for me."

Morgan is facing an FA charge

WOLVES chairman Steve Morgan is facing an FA fine if he is found guilty of insulting referee Mike Jones.

The Molineux chief re-narrated with Jones following a series of controversial decisions in the 2-1 defeat to Bournemouth on Saturday.

Football's governing body alleges 'his language and/or behaviour after the end of the fixture was abusive and/or insulting and/or improper'.

Jones had to be escorted off the pitch at the end of the game with a furious Morgan venting his frustration at the official. Wolves are – indirectly – involved in another FA charge with Georg Margreitter in the middle of a potential error.



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Victory road
Yeltz tuck another
away win under belt
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Parra shoot
Dutchman could get
Dicko's spot
Page 39



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Foster is first back of DK's runners

DUDLEY Kingswinford Running Club's men travelled to Gloucester for the second fixture of the Birmingham Cross Country League and the women went to Northampton for their West Midlands League meeting.

The course was a pancake flat near two miles circuit to be taken three times.

Ben Foster led the DK pack in 15th in 31.44, Kevin Duckworth was 65th in 33.58, Rob Sannwald in 79th in 34.29, Matt Biggs in 108th in 35.35, James Wright in 125th in 36.29 and Dave Norman in 127th in 36.32 making up the A team.

Mark Gatenby was 141st in 37.05, Steve Wood 148th in 37.27, Simon Hughes was 155th in 37.50, Daren Thompson was 159th in 37.58, Pete Hood was 169th in 38.26, Paul Richards was 182nd in 39.07, Mark Judge was 183rd in 39.10, Kieran Pitt was 186th in 39.20, Graham Wildgoose was 205th in 40.36 and Richard Tonks was 206th in 40.41. DK now rank 14th of the 18 teams competing and places them 13th in the league with two fixtures remaining.

A reduced women's team came 20th of the 28 teams with Rebecca Warren first back in 159th in 24.57, Marie Latreche was 202nd in 26.46.

Joel strikes like lightning

Wellington Amateurs 0 Dudley Town 5

DUDLEY Town ran riot away at Wellington Amateurs with Joel Ambalu scoring the Robins' fastest ever league goal in eight seconds.

They racked up the away win to leapfrog their hosts into 15th place in the West Midlands Premier Division.

Ambalu opened the scoring in dramatic fashion after Wellington defender Nathan Taylor's intended back pass to keeper Scot Hoof fell short.

The striker doubled Town's lead on 27 minutes with Lee Smith adding a third 10 minutes later.

A superb close range volley from Rhys Morgan on 63 minutes ended any hopes the Shropshire side had of a comeback.

Andy Arnold celebrated the Robins' fifth nine minutes later.

Canavan makes the difference for Glassboys

Stourbridge 1 Skelmersdale 0

DREW Canavan won a close game for Stourbridge with a wonderful free-kick but it was no more than the Glassboys deserved.

They edged a close game against the league leaders and defended well when they needed to as well as always looking threatening.

Stourbridge, who had lost their last two Evo-Stik Premier league games, attacked from the start, George Bowerman sending an early shot wide and Leon Broadhurst seeing his shot well saved by Martin Fea-

Football

ron. But it was Canavan who gave them the lead when he produced a wonderful free-kick from 20 yards out which sailed into the top left-hand corner of the net in the 39th minute after Bowerman had been fouled.

It followed a similar successful effort the week before against Buxton.

Skelmersdale, who have been on a run of bad form, rarely threatened in the first half and any attacking threat was comfortably contained by the Stourbridge defence.

But the visitors upped the pace after the break and Alex Meaney saw a shot well saved by Dean Coleman and the Glassboys keeper also blocked an effort from Connor McCarthy when the ball came out to the forward from the corner.

Coleman again denied the visitors when tipping a long shot from Kenny Strickland over on 53 minutes.

After this, clear cut chances were scarce, with defences on top, though Broadhurst went close for Stourbridge on the hour after he worked himself a good opportunity, but again his shot was saved.

Although there was plenty of late pressure from the visitors, centre-back Exodus Geohaghton marshalled the home defence well and they managed to contain any threats.

The win lifts Stourbridge up to 10th in the table, climbing above King's Lynn Town who are the visitors to the War Memorial Ground this Saturday.

Stourbridge: Coleman; Morgan-Parker; (Smikle 88); Brown (Till 69); Morris; Richards; Geohaghton; Haynes; Broadhurst; Bowerman (Ramsey-Dickson 76); Canavan; Knight.

Rested Lions stronger

Lions 34 Camp Hill 17

AFTER a week's rest, a stronger Lions outfit took the field against a Camp Hill side three places above them in the League.

The game exploded into life after two minutes with a fielded kick just outside the Lions' 22 being returned and finished off by Josh Tringham.

A quick exchange of penalties was followed by another fine try that saw Will Follows touch down.

Camp Hill then scored a converted try.

In the second half Camp Hill renewed their efforts just as the Lions lost focus. A scrum five metres out led to a penalty try.

Still down to 14 men the Lions scored through Ben Tringham with the conversion by young Sam Wilson.

Back to full strength a deft kick by Ben Tringham led to a home lineup which saw skipper Doolittle turn into an opportunist try. The conversion was by Wilson.

The match was wrapped up with a move ending with an inside pass from Wainwright leaving man of the match Josh Tringham with a 40 metre sprint for his hat-trick and conversion.

Dudley stung in second half

Bustleholme 2 Team Dudley 1

BUSTLEHOLME won this West Midlands Division One match up.

Reece Bancroft tapped in Dudley's opener.

But in the second half the Bs equalised with a far-post tap-in and a 74th-minute headed goal claimed the points.

The Chronicle, a Midland News Association Ltd publication, printed by the company at Ketterley, Telford, Thursday, December 11

DK SHUTOUT BY RAMPANT HALES

Halesowen 68 DK 0

HALESOWEN kicked off on a pitch ideally suited for open rugby.

It was soon evident why Halesowen are sitting third in the league and DK are one from the bottom. From the kick off, DK were under pressure and it took only six minutes for the home team to open their account.

Following good ball retention Halesowen worked the ball wide for right wing Patrick Lufkin to score wide out. Chris Hooper added the extra points with an excellent kick from the touch line.

Within a further three minutes, the home team created a carbon copy score to that of the first with Patrick Lufkin crossing wide out on the right. Once again, Chris Hooper was successful with the conversion with yet another superb kick.

Mistakes

DK began to ease their way into the game but were making too many mistakes and were constantly being penalised for ill-discipline.

In the 18th minute, following yet another mistake when DK were turned over, Halesowen counter attacked at speed which led to Patrick Lufkin crossing for this hat-trick.

This time Chris Hooper was unable to add the extra points.

DK were now finding it extremely hard to secure possession, with the Halesowen back row being particularly dominant. With Halesowen dominating possession and territory, it was only a question of time

Rugby

before they increased their lead. On the half hour they scored wide out on the right with centre Andy Robinson touching down.

Chris Hooper adjusted his radar and converted with yet another excellent kick. With five minutes of the half remaining Halesowen were awarded yet another penalty. The home team shunned the kick at goal and full back Chris Hooper took a quick tap and crossed unopposed. With a lesson in goal kicking, he converted his own try with another excellent kick.

K's difficult position was compounded when a prop was yellow-carded for yet another misdemeanour by the DK team.

Aaron Hudson had replaced injured Al Francis and, as it was him that received his marching orders, this meant DK were unable to field a complete front row.

This resulted in the referee ordering uncontested scrums. Halesowen ran in a further five tries courtesy of Tom Jordon, Tom Dempsey, Calum Young and Carl Robinson. Chris Hooper converted all five.



Edlyn Serge wins the lineout for DK who has another bad day being shut out by Halesowen

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